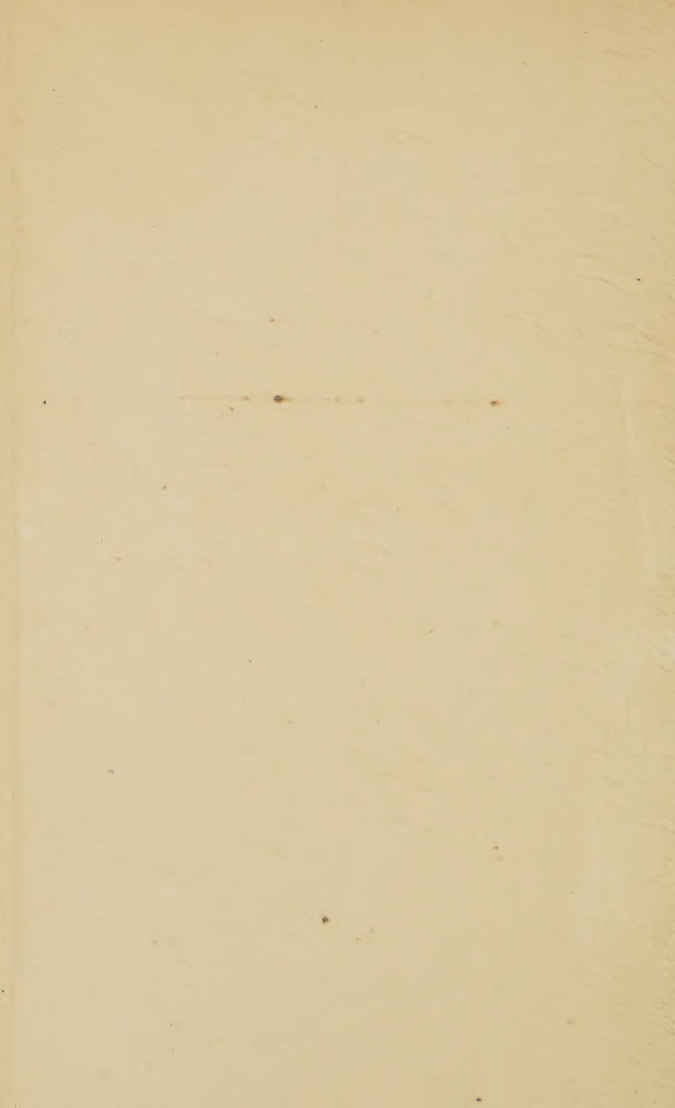










Yours very truly
W. Hood

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
THOMAS HOOD.

WITH SOME
ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.

VOL. I.



BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1868.



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NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR

THOMAS HOOD was born in the Poultry, London, in 1798. His father was a native of Scotland, and for many years acting partner in the firm of Vernor, Hood and Sharp, extensive booksellers and publishers. Thomas Hood was noted as a child for great vivacity of spirits, and, at a very early age, gave tokens of the genius for which he was afterwards distinguished. He was continually making shrewd and pointed remarks upon topics of which he was presumed to know nothing. This information we have derived from the Third Volume of the *Book of Gems*. For our further knowledge of the first half of the poet's life, we are entirely dependent upon the account which Hood has given of himself in his *Literary Reminiscences*, and we cannot do better than to extract the substance of those agreeable papers in the author's own words.

"There is something vastly flattering in the idea of appropriating the half of a quarter of a century, mixing it up with your personal experience, and then serving it out as your own *Life and Times*. On casting a retrospective glance,

however, across Memory's waste, it appeared so literally a waste, that vanity herself shrank from the inclosure act, as an unpromising speculation. Had I foreseen indeed, some five-and-thirty years ago, that such a demand would be made upon me, I might have laid myself out on purpose, as Dr. Watts recommends, so as 'to give of every day some good account at last.' I would have lived like a Frenchman, for effect, and made my life a long dress rehearsal of the future biography. I would have cultivated incidents '*pour servir*,' laid traps for adventures, and illustrated my memory like Rogers's, by a brilliant series of Tableaux. The earlier of my Seven Stages should have been more Wonder Phenomenon Comet and Balloon-like, and have been timed to a more Quicksilver pace than they have travelled; in short, my Life, according to the tradesman's promise, should have been 'fully equal to bespoke.' But, alas! in the absence of such a Scottish second-sight, my whole course of existence up to the present moment would hardly furnish materials for one of those 'bald biographies' that content the old gentlemanly pages of Sylvanus Urban. Lamb, on being applied to for a Memoir of himself, made answer that it would go into an epigram; and I really believe that I could compress my own into that baker's dozen of lines called a sonnet. Montgomery, indeed, has forestalled the greater part of it, in his striking poem on the 'Common Lot,'

but in prose, nobody could ever make any thing of it, except Mr. George Robins. The lives of literary men are proverbially barren of interest, and mine, instead of forming an exception to the general rule, would bear the application of the following words of Sir Walter Scott, much better than the career of their illustrious author: 'There is no man known at all in literature, who may not have more to tell of his private life than I have. I have surmounted no difficulties either of birth or education, nor have I been favoured by any particular advantages, and my life has been as void of incidents of importance as that of the weary knife-grinder—"Story! bless you, I have none to tell, sir."'

"Thus my birth was neither so humble that, like John Jones, I have been obliged amongst my lays to lay the cloth, and to court the cook and the muses at the same time; nor yet so lofty, that, with a certain lady of title, I could not write without letting myself down. Then, for education, though on the one hand I have not taken my degree, with Blucher; yet, on the other, I have not been rusticated, at the Open Air School, like the Poet of Helpstone.* As for incidents of importance, I remember none, except being drawn for a soldier, which was a hoax, and having the opportunity of giving a casting vote on a great

* Clare.

parochial question, only I did n't attend. I have never been even third in a duel, or crossed in love. The stream of time has flowed on with me very like that of the New River, which everybody knows has so little romance about it, that its Head has never troubled us with a Tale. My own story then, to possess any interest, must be a fib.

“To conclude, my life,—‘upon my life,’—is not worth giving, or taking. The principal just suffices for me to live upon; and of course, would afford little interest to any one else. Besides, I have a bad memory; and a personal history would assuredly be but a middling one, of which I have forgotten the beginning and cannot foresee the end. I must, therefore, respectfully decline giving my life to the world—at least till I have done with it—but to soften the refusal, I am willing, instead of a written character of myself, to set down all that I can recall of other authors, and, accordingly, the next number will contain the first instalment of my literary reminiscences

“The very earliest of one’s literary recollections must be the acquisition of the alphabet; and in the knowledge of the first rudiments I was placed on a par with the Learned Pig, by two maiden ladies that were called Hogsflesh. The circumstance would be scarcely worth mentioning, but that being a day-boarder, and taking my dinner

with the family, I became aware of a Baconian brother, who was never mentioned except by his initial, and was probably the prototype of the sensitive 'Mr. H.,' in Lamb's unfortunate farce. The school in question was situated in Tokenhouse Yard, a convenient distance for a native of the Poultry, or Birchin-lane, I forget which, and in truth am not particularly anxious to be more certainly acquainted with my parish. It was a metropolitan one, however, which is recorded without the slightest repugnance; firstly, for that, practically, I had no choice in the matter; and secondly, because, theoretically, I would as lief have been a native of London as of Stoke Pogis or Little Pedlington. If such local prejudices be of any worth, the balance ought to be in favor of the capital. The Dragon of Bow Church, or Gresham's Grasshopper, is as good a terrestrial sign to be born under as the dunghill cock on a village steeple. Next to being a citizen of the world, it must be the best thing to be born a citizen of the world's greatest city. To a lover of his kind, it should be a welcome dispensation that cast his nativity amidst the greatest congregation of the species; but a literary man should exult rather than otherwise that he first saw the light—or perhaps the fog—in the same metropolis as Milton, Gray, De Foe, Pope, Byron, Lamb, and other town-born authors, whose fame has nevertheless triumphed over the Bills of Mortality.

“ Having alluded to my first steps on the ladder of learning, it may not be amiss in this place to correct an assertion of my biographer in the Book of Gems, who states, that my education was finished at a certain suburban academy.* In this ignorant world, where we proverbially live and learn, we may indeed leave off school, but our education only terminates with life itself. But even in a more limited sense, instead of my education being finished, my own impression is, that it never so much as progressed towards so desirable a consummation at any such establishment, although much invaluable time was spent at some of those institutions where young gentlemen are literally boarded, lodged, and *done for*. My very first essay was at one of those places improperly called *semi-naries*, because they do not half teach any thing; the principals being probably aware that the little boys are as often consigned to them to be ‘out of a mother’s way, as for any thing else. Accordingly, my memory presents but a very dim image of a pedagogical powdered head, amidst a more vivid group of females of a composite character, part dry-nurse, part housemaid, and part governess,—with a matronly figure in the background, very like Mrs. S., allegorically representing, as Milton says, ‘our universal mother.’ But there is no glimpse of Minerva. Of those pleasant

* Wanostrocht’s, Camberwell.

associations with early school days, of which so much has been said and sung, there is little amongst my retrospections, excepting, perhaps, some sports which, like charity, might have been enjoyed at home, without the drawbacks of sundry strokes, neither apoplectic nor paralytic, periodical physic, and other unwelcome extras. I am not sure whether an invincible repugnance to early rising may not be attributable to our precocious wintry summonses, from a warm bed into a dim damp school-room, to play at filling our heads on an empty stomach; and perhaps I owe my decided sedentary habits to the disgust at our monotonous walks, or rather processions, or maybe to the sufferings of those longer excursions of big and little, where a pair of compasses had to pace as far and as fast as a pair of tongs. Nevertheless, I yet recall, with wonder, the occasional visits of grown-up ex-scholars to their old school, all in a flutter of gratitude and sensibility at recognizing the spot where they had been caned, and horsed, and flogged, and fagged, and brimstone-and-treacle-d, and black-dosed, and stick-jawed, and kibed, and fined,—where they had caught the measles and the mumps, and been overtaken, and under-taught—and then, by way of climax, sentimentally offering a presentation snuff-box to their revered preceptor, with an inscription, ten to one, in dog Latin on the lid!

“For my own part, were I to revisit such a

haunt of my youth, it would give me the greatest pleasure, out of mere regard to the rising generation, to find Prospect House turned into a Floor-Cloth Manufactory, and the playground converted to a bleach-field. The *tabatière* is out of the question. In the way of learning, I carried off nothing in exchange for my knife and fork and spoon, but a prize for Latin without knowing the Latin for prize, and a belief which I had afterwards to unbelieve again, that a block of marble could be cut in two with a razor.

“From the preparatory school, I was transplanted in due time to what is called, by courtesy, a finishing one, where I was immediately set to begin every thing again at the beginning. As this was but a backward way of coming forward, there seemed little chance of my ever becoming what Mrs. Malaprop calls ‘a progeny of learning;’ indeed my education was pursued very much after the plan laid down by that feminine authority. I had nothing to do with Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches; but I obtained a supercilious knowledge of accounts, with enough of geometry to make me acquainted with the contagious countries. Moreover, I became fluent enough in some unknown tongue to protect me from the French Mark; and I was sufficiently at home (during the vacations) in the quibbles of English grammar, to bore all my parents, rela-

tions, friends, and acquaintance, by a pedantical mending of their ‘cakeology.’ Such was the sum total of my acquirements; being, probably, quite as much as I should have learned at a Charity School, with the exception of the parochial accomplishment of hallooing and singing of anthems.

“The autumn of the year 1811, along with a most portentous comet, ‘with fear of change perplexing monarchs,’ brought, alas! a melancholy revolution in my own position and prospects, by the untimely death of my father; and my elder brother shortly following him to the grave, my bereaved mother naturally drew the fragments of the family more closely around her, so that thenceforward her dearest care was to keep her ‘only son, myself, at home.’ She did not, however, neglect my future interest, or persuade herself by any maternal vanity that a boy of twelve years old could have precociously finished his education; and, accordingly, the next spring found me at what might have been literally called a High School, in reference to its distance from the ground.

“In a house, formerly a suburban seat of the unfortunate Earl of Essex—over a grocer’s shop—up two pair of stairs, there was a very select day-school, kept by a decayed Dominie, as he would have been called in his native land. In his better days, when my brother was his pupil, he had been master of one of those wholesale concerns in which so many ignorant men have made

fortunes, by favor of high terms, low ushers, gullible parents, and victimized little boys. As our worthy Dominie, on the contrary, had failed to realize even a competence, it may be inferred, logically, that he had done better by his pupils than by himself; and my own experience certainly went to prove that he attended to the interests of his scholars, however he might have neglected his own. Indeed, he less resembled, even in externals, the modern worldly trading Schoolmaster than the good, honest, earnest, olden Pedagogue—a pedant, perchance, but a learned one, with whom teaching was ‘a labor of love,’ who had a proper sense of the dignity and importance of his calling, and was content to find a main portion of his reward in the honorable proficiency of his disciples. Small as was our College, its Principal maintained his state, and walked gowned and covered. His cap was of faded velvet, of black, or blue, or purple, or sad green, or, as it seemed, of all together, with a *nuance* of brown. His robe, of crimson damask, lined with the national tartan. A quaint, carved, high-backed, elbowed article, looking like an *émigré*, from a seat that had been at home in an aristocratical drawing-room, under the *ancien régime*, was his Professional Chair, which, with his desk, was appropriately elevated on a dais, some inches above the common floor. From this moral and material eminence, he cast a vigilant yet kindly

eye over some dozen of youngsters; for adversity, sharpened by habits of authority, had not soured him, or mingled a single tinge of bile with the peculiar red-streak complexion, so common to the healthier natives of the North. On one solitary occasion, within my memory, was he seriously, yet characteristically discomposed, and that was by his own daughter, whom he accused of ‘forgetting all regard for common decorum;’ because, forgetting that he was a Dominic as well as a Parent, she had heedlessly addressed him in public as ‘Father,’ instead of ‘Papa.’ The mere provoking contrariety of a dunce never stirred his spleen, but rather spurred his endeavor, in spite of the axiom, to make Nihil fit for any thing. He loved teaching for teaching’s sake; his kill-horse happened to be his hobby: and doubtless, if he had met with a penniless boy on the road to learning, he would have given him a lift, like the charitable Wagoner to Dick Whittington—for love. I recall, therefore, with pleasure, the cheerful alacrity with which I used to step up to recite my lesson, constantly forewarned—for every true schoolmaster has his stock joke—not to ‘stand in my own light.’ It was impossible not to take an interest in learning what he seemed so interested in teaching; and in a few months my education progressed infinitely farther than it had done in as many years under the listless superintendence of B. A., and LL. D. and Assistants.

I picked up *some* Latin, was a tolerable English Grammarian, and so good a French scholar, that I earned a few guineas—my first literary fee—by revising a new edition of ‘Paul et Virginie’ for the press. Moreover, as an accountant, I could work a *summum bonum*—i. e., a good sum.

“A friend of the family having taken a fancy to me, proposed to initiate me in those profitable mercantile mysteries which enabled Sir Thomas Gresham to gild his grasshopper ; and like another Frank Osbaldestone, I found myself planted on a counting-house stool, which nevertheless served occasionally for a Pegasus, on three legs, every foot, of course, being a dactyl or a spondee. In commercial matters, the only lesson imprinted on my memory is the rule, that when a ship’s crew from Archangel come to receive their L S. D., you must lock up your P. Y. C.

* * * *

“Time was, I sat upon a lofty stool,
 At lofty desk, and with a clerkly pen
 Began each morning, at the stroke of ten,
 To write in Bell and Co.’s commercial school;
 In Warnford Court, a shady nook and cool,
 The favourite retreat of merchant men;
 Yet would my quill turn vagrant even then,
 And take stray dips in the Castalian pool.
 Now double entry—now a flowery trope—
 Mingling poetic honey with trade wax—
 Blogg, Brothers—Milton—Grote and Prescott—Pope—
 Bristles—and Hogg—Glyn Mills and Halifax—
 Rogers—and Towgood—Hemp—the Bard of Hope—
 Barilla—Byron—Tallow—Burns—and Flax!

“My commercial career was a brief one, and deserved only a sonnet in commemoration. The fault, however, lay not with the muses. To commit poetry indeed is a crime ranking next to forgery in the counting-house code; and an Ode or a song dated Copthall Court, would be as certainly noted and protested as a dishonored bill. I have even heard of an unfortunate clerk, who lost his situation through being tempted by the jingle to subscribe under an account current

‘Excepted all errors
Made by John Ferrers,’

his employer emphatically declaring that Poetry and Logwood could never coexist in the same head. The principal of *our* firm, on the contrary, had a turn for the Belles Lettres, and would have winked with both eyes at verses which did not intrude into an invoice or confuse their figures with those of the Ledger. The true cause of my retirement from commercial affairs was more prosaic. My constitution, though far from venerable, had begun to show symptoms of decay: my appetite failed, and its principal creditor, the stomach, received only an ounce in the pound. My spirits daily became a shade lower—my flesh was held less and less firmly—in short, in the language of the price current, it was expected that I must ‘submit to a decline.’ The Doctors who were called in, declared imperatively that a mercantile

life would be the death of me—that by so much sitting, I was hatching a whole brood of complaints, and that no physician would insure me as a merchantman from the Port of London to the next Spring. The exchange, they said, was against me, and as the Exchange itself used to ring with ‘Life let us Cherish,’ there was no resisting the advice. I was ordered to abstain from Ashes, Bristles, and Petersburg yellow candle, and to indulge in a more generous diet—to take regular country exercise instead of the Russia Walk, and to go to bed early even on Foreign Post nights. Above all I was recommended change of air, and in particular the bracing breezes of the North. Accordingly I was soon shipped, as per advice, in a Scotch Smack, which ‘*smacked* through the breeze,’ as Dibdin sings, so merrily, that on the fourth morning we were in sight of the prominent old Steeple of ‘Bonny Dundee.’

“Like other shipments, I had been regularly addressed to the care of a consignee;—but the latter, not anxious, probably, to take charge of a hobbledehoy, yet at the same time unwilling to incur the reproach of having a relative in the same town and not under the same roof, peremptorily declined the office. Nay, more, she pronounced against me a capital sentence, so far as returning to the place from whence I came, and even proceeded to bespeak my passage and reship

my luggage. Judging from such vigorous measures the temper of my customer, instead of remonstrating, I affected resignation, and went with a grave face through the farce of a formal leave-taking; I even went on board, but it was in company with a stout fellow who relanded my baggage; and thus, whilst my transporter imagined, good easy soul! that the rejected article was sailing round St. Abb's Head, or rolling off the Bass, he was actually safe and snug in Dundee, quietly laughing in his sleeve with the Law at his back. I have a confused recollection of meeting, some three or four days afterwards, a female cousin on her road to school, who at sight of me turned suddenly round, and galloped off towards home with the speed of a scared heifer.

“My first concern was now to look out for some comfortable roof, under which ‘for a consideration’ one would be treated as one of the family. I entered accordingly into a treaty with a respectable widower, who had no sons of his own, but in spite of the most undeniable references, and a general accordance as to terms, there occurred a mysterious hitch in the arrangement, arising from a whimsical prepossession which only came afterwards to my knowledge—namely, that an English laddie, instead of supping parrich, would inevitably require a rump-steak to his breakfast! My next essay was more successful; and ended in my being regularly installed in a

boarding-house, kept by a Scotchwoman, who was not so sure of my being a beefeater. She was a sort of widow, with a seafaring husband 'as good as dead,' and in her appearance not unlike a personification of *rouge et noir*, with her red eyes, her red face, her yellow teeth, and her black velvet cap. The first day of my term happened to be also the first day of the new year, and on stepping from my bedroom, I encountered our Hostess—like a witch and her familiar spirit—with a huge bottle of whiskey in one hand, and a glass in the other. It was impossible to decline the dram she pressed upon me, and very good it proved, and undoubtedly strong, seeing that for some time I could only muse its praise in expressive silence, and indeed, I was only able to speak with 'a *small still* voice' for several minutes afterwards. Such was my characteristic introduction to the Land of Cakes, where I was destined to spend the greater part of two years, under circumstances likely to materially influence the coloring and filling up of my future life.

"To properly estimate the dangers of my position, imagine a boy of fifteen, at the Nore, as it were, of life, thus left dependent on his own pilotage for a safe voyage to the Isle of Man; or conceive a juvenile Telemachus, without a Mentor, brought suddenly into the perilous neighbourhood of Calypso and her enchantments. It will hardly be expected, that from some half-dozen of young

bachelors, there came forth any solemn voice didactically warning me in the strain of the sage Imlac, to the Prince of Abyssinia. In fact, I recollect receiving but one solitary serious admonition, and that was from a she cousin of ten years old, that the Spectator I was reading on a Sunday morning, 'was not the Bible.' For there was still much of this pious rigour extant in Scotland, though a gentleman was no longer committed to Tolboothia Infelix, for an unseasonable promenade during church time.

"To return to my boarding-house, which, with all its chairs, had none appropriated to a Professor of Moral Philosophy. In the absence of such a monitor, nature, fortunately for myself, had gifted me with a taste for reading, which the languor of ill-health, inclining me to sedentary habits, helped materially to encourage. Whatever books, good, bad, or indifferent, happened to come within my reach, were perused with the greatest avidity, and however indiscriminate the course, the balance of the impressions thence derived was decidedly in favor of the allegorical lady, so wisely preferred by Hercules when he had to make his election between Virtue and Vice. Of the material that ministered to this appetite, I shall always regret that I did not secure, as a literary curiosity—a collection of halfpenny Ballads, the property of a Grocer's apprentice, and which contained, amongst

other matters, a new version of Chevy Chase, wherein the victory was transferred to the Scots. In the mean time, this bookishness acquired for me a sort of reputation for scholarship amongst my comrades, and in consequence my pen was sometimes called into requisition, in divers and sometimes delicate cases. Thus for one party, whom the Gods had not made poetical, I composed a love-letter in verse; for another, whose education had been neglected, I carried on a correspondence with reference to a tobacco manufactory in which he was a sleeping-partner; whilst, on a graver occasion, the hand now peacefully setting down these reminiscences, was employed in penning a most horrible peremptory invitation to pistols and twelve paces, till one was nicked. * * * * I forget the precise result—but certainly there was no duel.

“To do justice to the climate of ‘stout and original Scotland,’ it promised to act kindly by the constitution committed to its care. The air evidently agreed with the natives; and auld Robin Grays and John Andersons were plenty as blackberries, and Auld Lang Syne himself seemed to walk bonneted amongst these patriarchal figures in the likeness of an old man covered with a mantle. The effect on myself was rather curious—for I seemed to have come amongst a generation that scarcely belonged to my era; mature spinsters, waning bachelors, very motherly ma-

trons, and experienced fathers, that I should have set down as uncles and aunts, called themselves my cousins; reverend personages, apparently grandfathers and grandmothers, were simply great uncles and aunts: and finally I enjoyed an interview with a relative oftener heard of traditionally, than encountered in the body—a great-great-grandmother—still a tall woman and a tolerable pedestrian, going indeed down the hill, but with the wheel well locked. It was like coming amongst the Strulldbrugs; and truly, for any knowledge to the contrary, many of these Old Mortalities are still living, enjoying their sneeshing, their toddy, their cracks, and particular reminiscences. The very phrase of being ‘Scotch’d, but not killed,’ seems to refer to this Caledonian tenacity of life, of which the well-known Walking Stewart was an example: he was an annuitant in the County-office, and as the actuaries would say, died very hard. It must be difficult for the tea-totallers to reconcile this longevity with the imputed enormous consumption of ardent spirits beyond the Tweed.

“All these favourable signs I duly noted; and prophetically refrained from delivering the letter of introduction to Doctor C——, which was to place me under his medical care. As the sick man said when he went into the gin-shop instead of the hospital, ‘I trusted to natur.’ Whenever

the weather permitted, therefore, which was generally when there were no new books to the fore, I haunted the banks and braes, or paid flying visits to the burns, with a rod intended to punish that rising generation amongst fishes called trout. But I whipped in vain. Trout there were in plenty, but like obstinate double teeth, with a bad operator, they would neither be pulled out nor come out of themselves. Still the sport, if so it might be called, had its own attractions, as, the catching excepted, the whole of the Waltonish enjoyments were at my command, the contemplative quiet, the sweet wholesome country air, and the picturesque scenery—not to forget the relishing the homely repast at the shealing or the mill; sometimes I went alone, but often we were a company, and then we had for our attendant a journeyman tobacco-spinner, an original, and literary withal, for he had a reel in his head, whence ever and anon he unwound a line of Allan Ramsay, or Beattie, or Burns. Methinks I still listen, trudging homeward in the gloaming, to the recitation of that appropriate stanza, beginning—

‘At the close of the day when the hamlet was still,’

delivered with a gusto, perhaps only to be felt by a day-labouring mechanic, who had ‘nothing but his evenings to himself.’

“To these open-air pursuits, sailing was after-

wards added, bringing me acquainted with the boatmen and fishermen of The Craig, a hardy race, rough and ready-witted, from whom perchance was first derived my partiality for all marine bipeds and sea-craft, from Flag Admirals down to Jack Junk, the proud first-rate to the humble boatie that 'wins the bairns' bread.' The Tay at Dundee is a broad noble river, with a raging tide, which, when it differs with a contrary wind, will get up '*jars*' (Anglicé waves) quite equal to those of a family manufacture. It was at least a good preparatory school for learning the rudiments of boat craft; whereof I acquired enough to be able at need to take the helm without either going too near the wind or too distant from the port. Not without some boyish pride I occasionally found myself intrusted with the guidance of the Coach-Boat,—so called from its carrying the passengers by the Edinburgh Mail—particularly in a calm, when the utmost exertions of the crew, four old man-of-war's-men, were required at the oars. It not unfrequently happened, however, that 'the laddie' was unceremoniously ousted by the unanimous vote, and sometimes by the united strength, of the ladies, who invariably pitched upon the oldest old gentleman in the vessel to

'Steer her up and haud her gaun.'

The consequence being the landing with all the

baggage, some mile above or below the town—and a too late conviction, that the *Elder* Brethren of our Trinity House were not the best Pilots.

“My first acquaintance with the press—a memorable event in an author’s experience—took place in Scotland. Amongst the temporary sojourners at our boarding-house, there came a legal antiquarian who had been sent for from Edinburgh, expressly to make some unprofitable researches amongst the mustiest of the civic records. It was my humour to think, that in Political as well as Domestic Economy, it must be better to sweep the Present than to dust the Past; and certain new brooms were recommended to the Town Council in a quizzing letter, which the then editor of the Dundee Advertiser or Chronicle thought fit to favour with a prominent place in his columns. ‘’Tis pleasant sure,’ sings Lord Byron, ‘to see one’s self in print,’ and according to the popular notion I ought to have been quite up in my stirrups, if not standing on the saddle, at thus seeing myself, for the first strange time, set up in type. Memory recalls, however, but a very moderate share of exaltation, which was totally eclipsed, moreover, by the exuberant transports of an accessory before the fact, whom, methinks, I still see in my mind’s eye, rushing out of the printing-office with the wet sheet steaming in his hand,

and fluttering all along the High Street, to announce breathlessly that 'we were in.' But G. was an indifferent scholar, even in English, and therefore thought the more highly of this literary feat.

"The reception of my letter in the Dundee Newspaper encouraged me to forward a contribution to the Dundee Magazine, the Editor of which was kind enough, as Winifred Jenkins says, to 'wrap my bit of nonsense under his Honor's Kiver,' without charging any thing for its insertion. Here was success sufficient to turn a young author at once into 'a scribbling miller,' and make him sell himself, body and soul, after the German fashion, to that minor Mephistophiles, the Printer's Devil! Nevertheless, it was not till years afterwards, and the lapse of a term equal to an ordinary apprenticeship, that the Inap in question became really my Familiar. In the mean time, I continued to compose occasionally, and like the literary performances of Mr. Weller and Mr. Pecksniff, my lucubrations were generally committed to paper, not in what is commonly called written hand, but an imitation of print. Such a course hints suspiciously of type and antitype, and a searching eye to the Row, whereas, it was adopted simply to make the reading more easy, and thus enable me the more readily to form a judgment of the effect of my little efforts. It is more difficult than may be supposed to decide on the value

of a work in MS., and especially when the handwriting presents only a swell mob of bad characters, that must be severally examined and re-examined to arrive at the merits or demerits of the case. Print settles it, as Coleridge used to say: and to be candid, I have more than once reversed, or greatly modified a previous verdict, on seeing a rough proof from the press.

“My mental constitution, however weak my physical one, was proof against that type-us fever which parches most scribblers till they are set up, done up, and maybe, cut up, in print and boards. Perhaps I had read, and trembled at the melancholy annals of those unfortunates, who, rashly undertaking to write for bread, had poisoned themselves, like Chatterton, for want of it, or choked themselves, like Otway, on obtaining it. Possibly, having learned to think humbly of myself—there is nothing like early sickness and sorrow for ‘taking the conceit’ out of one—my vanity did not presume to think, with certain juvenile Traecticians, that I ‘had a call’ to hold forth in print for the edification of mankind. Perchance, the very deep reverence my reading had led me to entertain for our Bards and Sages, deterred me from thrusting myself into the fellowship of beings that seemed only a little lower than the angels. However, in spite of that very common excuse for publication, ‘the advice of a

friend,' who seriously recommended the submitting of my MSS. to a literary authority, with a view to his *imprimatur*, my slight acquaintance with the press was pushed no farther."

After a residence of two years at Dundee, Hood returned to London, and engaged himself to his uncle, Mr. Robert Sands, to learn the art of engraving. He was afterwards with one of the Le Keux, for the same purpose.

"I had selected a branch of the Fine Arts for my serious pursuit. Prudence, the daughter of Wisdom, whispering, perhaps, that the engraver, Pye, had a better chance of beefsteak inside, than Pye the Laureate; not that the verse-spinning was quite given up. Though working in *aqua fortis*, I still played with Castaly, now writing—all monkeys are imitators, and all young authors are monkeys—now writing a Bandit, to match the Corsair, and anon, hatching a Lalla Crow, by way of companion to Lalla Rookh. Moreover, about this time, I became a member of a private select Literary Society that 'waited on Ladies and Gentlemen at their own houses.' As regards my own share in the Essays and Arguments, it misgives me, that they no more satisfied our decidedly serious members, than they now propitiate Mr. Rae Wilson. At least, one Society night, in escorting a female Fellow to-

wards her home, she suddenly stopped me, taking advantage, perhaps, of the awful locality, and its associations, just in front of our chief criminal prison, and looking earnestly in my face, by the light of a Newgate lamp, inquired somewhat abruptly, 'Mr. Hood! are you not an Infidel?'

"In the mean time, whilst thus playing at Literature, an event was ripening which was to introduce me to Authorship in earnest, and make the Muse, with whom I had only flirted, my companion for life. It had often occurred to me, that a striking, romantical, necromantical, metaphysical, melo-dramatical, Germanish story, might be composed, the interest of which should turn on the mysterious influences of the fate of A over the destiny of B, the said parties having no more natural or apparent connection with each other than Tenterden Steeple and the Goodwin Sands. An instance of this occult contingency occurred in my own case; for I did not even know by sight the unfortunate gentleman on whose untimely exit depended my entrance on the literary stage. In the beginning of the year 1821, a memorable duel, originating in a pen-and-ink quarrel, took place at Chalk Farm, and terminated in the death of Mr. John Scott, the able Editor of the London Magazine. The melancholy result excited great interest, in which I fully participated, little dreaming that his catastrophe involved any consequences of importance

to myself. But, on the loss of its conductor, the Periodical passed into other hands. The new Proprietors were my friends; they sent for me, and after some preliminaries, I was duly installed as a sort of sub-Editor of the London Magazine.

“It would be affectation to say, that engraving was resigned with regret. There is always something mechanical about the art—moreover, it is as unwholesome as wearisome to sit copper-fastened to a board, with a cantle scooped out to accommodate your stomach, if you have one, painfully ruling, ruling, and still ruling lines straight or crooked, by the long hundred to the square inch, at the doubly-hazardous risk which Wordsworth so deprecates, of ‘growing double.’ So farewell Woollett! Strange! Bartolozzi! I have said, my vanity did not rashly plunge me into authorship; but no sooner was there a legitimate opening than I jumped at it, *à la Grimaldi*, head foremost, and was speedily behind the scenes.

“To judge by my zeal and delight in my new pursuit, the bowl had at last found its natural bias. Not content with taking articles, like candidates for holy orders—with rejecting articles like the Belgians—I dreamt articles, thought articles, wrote articles, which were all inserted by the editor, of course with the concurrence of his deputy. The more irksome parts of author-

ship, such as the correction of the press, were to me labors of love. I received a revise from Mr. Baldwin's Mr. Parker, as if it had been a proof of his regard; forgave him all his slips, and really thought that printers' devils were not so black as they are painted. But my top-gallant glory was in 'our Contributors!' How I used to look forward to Elia! and backward for Hazlitt, and all round for Edward Herbert, and how I used to *look up* to Allan Cunningham! for at that time the London had a goodly list of writers—a rare company. It is now defunct, and perhaps no ex-periodical might so appropriately be apostrophized with the Irish funereal question—'Arrah, honey, why did you die?' Had not you an editor, and elegant prose writers, and beautiful poets, and broths of boys for criticism and classics, and wits and humorists,—Elia, Cary, Procter, Cunningham, Bowring, Barton, Hazlitt, Elton, Hartley Coleridge, Talfourd, Soane, Horace Smith, Reynolds, Poole, Clare, and Thomas Benyon, with a power besides. Hadn't you Lions' Heads with Traditional Tales? Hadn't you an Opium Eater, and a Dwarf, and a Giant, and a Learned Lamb, and a Green Man? Had not you a regular Drama, and a Musical Report, and a Report of Agriculture, and an Obituary and a Price Current, and a current price, of only half-a-crown? Arrah, why did you die? Why, somehow the contributors fell away—the concern went

into other hands—worst of all, a new editor tried to put the *Belles Lettres* in Utilitarian envelopes; whereupon, the circulation of the Miscellany, like that of poor *Le Fevre*, got slower, slower, slower,—and slower still—and then stopped for ever! It was a sorry scattering of those old Londoners! Some went out of the country: one (*Clare*) went into it. *Lamb* retreated to *Colebrooke*. *Mr. Cary* presented himself to the British Museum. *Reynolds* and *Barry* took to engrossing when they should pen a stanza, and *Thomas Benyon* gave up literature.

“It is with mingled feelings of pride, pleasure, and pain, that I revert to those old times, when the writers I had long known and admired in spirit were present to me in the flesh—when I had the delight of listening to their wit and wisdom from their own lips, of gazing on their faces, and grasping their right hands. Familiar figures rise before me, familiar voices ring in my ears, and, alas! amongst them are shapes that I must never see, sounds that I can never hear, again. Before my departure from England, I was one of the few who saw the grave close over the remains of one whom to know as a friend was to love as a relation. Never did a better soul go to a better world! Never perhaps, (giving the lie direct to the common imputation of envy, malice, and hatred, amongst the brotherhood,) never did an author descend—to quote his fa-

vourite Sir T. Browne—into ‘the land of the mole and the pismire’ so hung with golden opinions, and honored and regretted with such sincere eulogies and elegies, by his contemporaries. To HIM, the first of these, my reminiscences, is eminently due, for I lost in him not only a dear and kind friend, but an invaluable critic; one whom, were such literary adoptions in modern use, I might well name, as Cotton called Walton, my ‘father.’

“I was sitting one morning beside our Editor, busily correcting proofs, when a visitor was announced, whose name, grumbled by a low ventriloquial voice, like Tom Pipes calling from the hold through the hatchway, did not resound distinctly on my tympanum. However, the door opened, and in came a stranger, a figure remarkable at a glance, with a fine head, on a small spare body, supported by two almost immaterial legs. He was clothed in sables, of a bygone fashion, but there was something wanting, or something present about him, that certified he was neither a divine, nor a physician, nor a schoolmaster: from a certain neatness and sobriety in his dress, coupled with his sedate bearing, he might have been taken, but that such a costume would be anomalous, for a *Quaker* in black. He looked still more like (what he really was) a literary Modern Antique, a New-Old Author, a living Anachronism, contemporary at

once with Burton the Elder, and Colman the Younger. Meanwhile he advanced with rather a peculiar gait, his walk was plantigrade, and with a cheerful ‘How d’ye,’ and one of the blandest, sweetest smiles that ever brightened a manly countenance, held out two fingers to the Editor. The two gentlemen in black soon fell into discourse; and whilst they conferred, the Lavater principle within me set to work upon the interesting specimen thus presented to its speculations. It was a striking intellectual face, full of wiry lines, physiognomical quips and cranks, that gave it great character. There was much earnestness about the brows, and a deal of speculation in the eyes, which were brown and bright, and ‘quick in turning;’ the nose, a decided one, though of no established order; and there was a handsome smartness about the mouth. Altogether it was no common face—none of those *willow-pattern* ones, which nature turns out by thousands at her potteries;—but more like a chance specimen of the Chinese ware, one to the set—unique, antique, quaint. No one who had once seen it, could pretend not to know it again. It was no face to lend its countenance to any confusion of persons in a Comedy of Errors. You might have sworn to it piecemeal,—a separate affidavit for every feature. In short, his face was as original as his figure; his figure as his character: his character as his writings; his writings

the most original of the age. After the literary business had been settled, the Editor invited his contributor to dinner, adding 'we shall have a hare—'

'And—and—and—and many Friends!'

"The hesitation in the speech, and the readiness of the allusion, were alike characteristic of the individual, whom his familiars will perchance have recognized already as the delightful Essayist, the capital Critic, the pleasant Wit and Humorist, the delicate-minded and large-hearted Charles Lamb! He was shy like myself with strangers, so, that despite my yearnings, our first meeting scarcely amounted to an introduction. We were both at dinner, amongst the hare's many friends, but our acquaintance got no farther, in spite of a desperate attempt on my part to attract his notice. His complaint of the Decay of Beggars presented another chance: I wrote on coarse paper, and in ragged English, a letter of thanks to him as if from one of his mendicant clients, but it produced no effect. I had given up all hope, when one night, sitting sick and sad, in my bedroom, racked with the rheumatism, the door was suddenly opened, the well-known quaint figure in black walked in without any formality, and with a cheerful 'Well, boy, how are you?' and the bland, sweet smile, extended the two fingers. They were eagerly clutched,

of course, and from that hour we were firm friends.

“Thus characteristically commenced my intimacy with C. Lamb. He had recently become my neighbour, and in a few days called again, to ask me to tea, ‘to meet Wordsworth.’ In spite of any idle jests to the contrary, the name had a spell in it that drew me to Colebrooke Cottage with more alacrity than consisted with prudence, stiff joints, and a North wind. But I was willing to run, at least hobble, some risk, to be of a party in a parlour with the Author of *Laodamia* and *Heartleap Well*. As for his Betty Foy-bles, he is not the first man by many, who has met with a *simple* fracture through riding his theory-hack so far and so fast, that it broke down with him. If he has now and then put on a nightcap, so have his own next-door mountains. If he has babbled, sometimes, like an infant of *two* years old; he has also thought, and felt, and spoken, the beautiful fancies, and tender affections, and artless language, of the children who can say ‘We are *seven*.’ Along with food for babes, he has furnished strong meat for men. So I put on my great-coat, and in a few minutes found myself, for the first time, at a door, that opened to me as frankly as its master’s heart; for, without any preliminaries of hall, passage, or parlour, one single step across the threshold brought me into the sitting-room, and in sight of the domestic

hearth. The room looked brown with 'old bokes,' and beside the fire sat Wordsworth, and his sister, the hospitable Elia, and the excellent Bridget.

* * * *

"Amongst other notable men who came to Colebrooke Cottage, I had twice the good fortune of meeting with S. T. Coleridge. The first time he came from Highgate with Mrs. Gilman, to dine with 'Charles and Mary.' What a contrast to Lamb was the full-bodied Poet, with his waving white hair, and his face round, ruddy, and unfurrowed as a holy Friar's! Apropos to which face he gave us a humorous description of an unfinished portrait, that served him for a sort of barometer, to indicate the state of his popularity. So sure as his name made any temporary stir, out came the canvas on the easel, and a request from the artist for another sitting: down sank the Original in the public notice, and back went the copy into a corner, till some fresh publication or accident again brought forward the Poet; and then forth came the picture for a few more touches. I sincerely hope it has been finished! What a benign, smiling face it was! What a comfortable, respectable figure! What a model, methought, as I watched and admired the 'Old Man eloquent,' for a Christian bishop! But he was, perhaps, scarcely orthodox enough to be trusted with a mitre. At least, some of his voluntaries would have frightened a common everyday con-

gregation from their propriety. Amongst other matters of discourse, he came to speak of the strange notions some literal-minded persons form of the joys of Heaven; joys they associated with mere temporal things, in which, for his own part, finding no delight in this world, he could find no bliss hereafter, without a change in his nature, tantamount to the loss of his personal identity. For instance, he said, there are persons who place the whole angelical beatitude in the possession of a pair of wings to flap about with, like '*a sort of celestial poultry*.' After dinner he got up, and began pacing to and fro, with his hands behind his back, talking and walking, as Lamb laughingly hinted, as if qualifying for an itinerant preacher; now fetching a simile from Loddiges' garden, at Hackney; and then flying off for an illustration to the sugar-making in Jamaica. With his fine, flowing voice, it was glorious music, of the 'never-ending, still-beginning' kind; and you did not wish it to end. It was rare flying, as in the Nassau Balloon; you knew not whither, nor did you care. Like his own bright-eyed Marinere, he had a spell in his voice that would not let you go. To attempt to describe my own feeling afterward, I had been carried, spiralling, up to heaven by a whirlwind intertwined with sunbeams, giddy and dazzled, but not displeased, and had then been rained down again with a shower of mundane stocks and stones that battered out of me all

recollection of what I had heard, and what I had seen!"

We have drawn rather freely upon Hood's account of his early life, both because we think that these autobiographical sketches convey a lively and true impression of the personal character of the man, and because our information concerning his career after he became distinguished in literature consists, in the main, of barren facts which are already well known to the world.

Before Hood became connected with the *London Magazine*, he had, as appears above, printed some trifles in a Dundee newspaper and in the *Dundee Magazine*. His first book, *Odes and Addresses to Great People*, was published anonymously, and was partly the work of his brother-in-law, Mr. J. H. Reynolds. His next was, we believe, the *Progress of Cant*. In 1826, he made a collection of his contributions to the *London Magazine*, and printed it with some additions, under the title of *Whims and Oddities*. A second and a third edition of this book was demanded by the public in the course of the two succeeding years. His *National Tales* appeared in 1827, and was followed by a little volume containing the *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, *Hero and Leander*, *Lycus the Centaur*, and other poems. He began the *Comic Annual* in 1829, and it was continued nine years. In the same year came

out the comic poem of the Epping Hunt. Hood was also for one year editor of the *Gem*, and wrote for it the wonderful ballad of Eugene Aram.

In the spring of 1831, Hood became occupier of a pleasant residence in Essex, called Lake House.* Here he wrote his novel of Tylney Hall. Pecuniary difficulties compelled him to leave Lake House in 1835. The *Comic Annual* terminated in 1837, and the next year Hood printed a selection of his contributions to it, with the addition of new matter, in a series of monthly numbers; this was the very popular miscellany called *Hood's Own*. The state of his health now obliged him to go to the continent to recruit, and while in Belgium he printed his delightful little book, *Up the Rhine*. On his return to England he became editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, after his retirement from which, in 1843, he published the best of his writings in that periodical, with additions in prose and verse, under the style of *Whimsicalities*.

In 1844 Hood started his last periodical, *Hood's Magazine*, and he continued to contribute to its pages until within a month before his death. Among the pieces which he furnished, are the *Schoolmistress Abroad*, and his novel of *Our Family*, which he did not live to complete, and

* *National Cyclopædia*.

the last chapters of which he wrote propped up by pillows in bed.

Towards the close of the poet's life, a government pension of 100*l.* was offered him by Sir Robert Peel, which was transferred, at his own request, to his wife.

Hood died on the 3d of May, 1845. He left, besides his widow, two children,—a son and a daughter. As the government pension would terminate with Mrs. Hood's life, a subscription was set on foot for the purpose of raising a sum, to be held in trust for the benefit of the family during the widow's life, and at her death to be divided between the children.

Hood was his whole life an invalid, and the slow disease which had been many years wasting a fragile constitution was terminated by months of extreme debility and suffering. To these bodily afflictions the anxieties of poverty were added towards the close of his career, anxieties which could have been only partially alleviated by the small pension conferred on him by the government. Such being his circumstances, it would have been no wonder if something of the sick-man had got into his compositions,—a dash of peevishness and despondency, or at any rate, distorted views and morbid fancies; and the world, which has often been forward to excuse the outrageous vices of genius, might not unreasonably have pardoned a little to the ordinary infirmities

of human nature. But no traces of disease will be found in any of Hood's writings. They are pervaded by a cheerfulness, a spring and elasticity which belong not merely to health, but to vigorous youth. We shall look in vain for petulance, acidity, ennui, misanthropy. He never even lays himself out to gain the reader's just sympathy for his sufferings, or takes credit to himself for his patience. If he alludes to his private misfortunes, it is to turn them into a laughing apology for not being punctually ready with his expected supply of amusement. When troubles were pressing upon him thicker than ever, he forgot his private griefs to plead the cause of greater sufferers in such compositions as the *Song of the Shirt** and the *Lady's Dream*. This manly fortitude and self-forgetful benevolence constitute Hood a phenomenon in literature, and the interest with which his last days were watched both in America and in England, as well as the universal tribute of admiration called forth by his death, showed that the singular virtues of his character were appreciated by the world.

It might be supposed, when we consider the circumstances of sickness and sorrow under which many of Hood's comic pieces were written, that his mirth was often of that artificial kind which professional purveyors of amusement for the pub-

* First printed in the fifth volume of *Punch*.

lie must frequently be obliged to assume. Instances enough there are, great and small, of this forced gayety, from Molière down to the poor vulgar clown who breaks his joke and his head for our entertainment, in the pantomime. Too often strained eyes and tired hands must tug at the needle to make us fine, and sometimes aching heads and hearts must scratch at the pen to make us merry :

“Et tel mot, pour avoir réjoui le lecteur,
A coûté bien souvent des larmes à l'auteur.”

But it seems to us that such a view of Hood's humorous writings would smack of sentimentality. There is no hollowness in his mirth ; he laughs with his subject, and his humour, if not boisterous, is hearty and sincere. It is no objection to this supposition, that Hood passes with such readiness from comical conceits to pathetic or even awful ideas. Some minds are capable of contemplating only one side of a subject at a time, and such are not easily diverted from any current of feeling into which they may happen to be drawn. Others, of a larger range and superior susceptibility, gifted with an equal sympathy for the sad and the ludicrous, take in the whole of a subject at once, and reflect its lights and its shades with the same fidelity. To them the grand and the grotesque present themselves, as they are found in life and in human nature, not as things incom-

patible, but contemporaneously and side by side. In fact, it is only "this muddy vesture of decay," the subjection of the mind to physical sensations and temporal anxieties, which makes us prone to look upon laughter as a thing profane, and to regard the sadder as the wiser man. The great Sir Thomas More, conscious of innocence, assured of immortality, and full of faith in God and in goodness, did not think mirth unseasonable even upon the scaffold. Something of the same elevation of spirit and breadth of view, coöperating with a happy temper, carried Hood cheerfully through the harshest trials of life, and the very valley of the shadow of death. "His sportive humour, like the rays from a crackling fire in a dilapidated building, had long played among the fractures of a ruined constitution, and flashed upon the world through the flaws and rents of a shattered wreck. Yet infirm as was the fabric, the equal mind was never disturbed to the last. He contemplated the approach of death with a composed philosophy and a resigned soul.* His bodily sufferings had made no change in his mental character. It was the same as in his publications—at times lively and jocular, at times serious and affecting; and upon the one great subject of a death-bed hope, he declared himself, as through-

* See the remarkable verses, written a very short time before he died, "Farewell Life! my senses swim." (Vol. ii. p. 104.)

out life, opposed to canters and hypocrites,—a class he had always detested and written against; while he set the highest price upon sincere Christianity.”*

Hood's poetry appears to us to give a very distinct impression of the man. His modest estimation of himself and his genuine refinement did not, indeed, allow him to make his personal concerns the leading subject of his verse, and forbade indelicate confidences with the public, but his disposition was ingenuous and he was perfectly free from the taint of affectation. His best pieces evince an exquisite purity of taste as well as of feeling, and not a line in his writings can be charged with vulgarity. He was as tender as he was manly, in his affections and in his sensibilities. One of his own guild has said of him, “he was a man of a most free and noble spirit, who harboured none of the grudging jealousies too often attendant on the pursuit of literature, who found no detraction from his own merits in the success and praise of another.” He displayed the same generosity in his treatment of all mankind. Consequently, such satire as his writings contain is general and not personal, (the Ode to Rae Wilson is hardly an exception to this remark,) and it is besides good-humoured and not malignant; it is meant to lead men to improve-

* Literary Gazette.

ment through their better feelings,—the only kind of satire that ever did much good. The whole temper of the man was cheerful, benevolent, and liberal; his heart and mind in every part sound, and rough as was his path in life, his feelings preserved throughout the freshness and sensitiveness of youth. These noble qualities inspire us with an affectionate attachment to Hood similar to that which we feel for Charles Lamb, whom he resembled in many points both of character and of genius.

We will conclude our very inadequate notice of this amiable writer, with a few paragraphs by a candid and genial critic in the *Edinburgh Review*.*

“In looking to the character of Mr. Hood’s mind, we are immediately struck with the variety which it displays. We do not at the present day require to be told that there is no incompatibility between wit and pathos, or that sensibility and humour may dwell together in the same heart; for we have been rendered familiar with such associations in the character of our greatest writers. But in Hood this alliance is more than usually conspicuous. He is open to all influences, and yields himself with equal pliancy to all. He can

* April, 1846.

call up the most grotesque conceptions,—the most incongruous and ludicrous imagery; whole trains of comic and mirth-inspiring fancies wait upon his will without an effort: but he seems to find himself as much at home in the contemplation of serious human emotion—in listening to, or echoing back, some old and moving story of love and pity—or letting his thoughts wander with devout gratitude over the beauties of creation, or in sympathy with the fading glories of old traditions. In not a few of his poems he has even ventured to commingle these discordant elements; and the quaintest allusions, quips and cranks of all kinds, stand side by side with thoughts of earnest interest, and happy homely touches of feeling, which sink quietly but surely into the heart. He has not only paid his court alternately to Comedy and Tragedy, and with success; but he may be said to have introduced these ancient rivals to each other, and taught them by an interchange of good offices to live together in cordial union.

“Another indispensable quality of a poet Hood possessed in a high degree,—that of clear vision. It pervaded his choice of themes, his imagery, the whole expression of his thoughts. For the mystical or the vaporous,—those reveries of airy republics and fantastic schemes of moral regeneration, on which the great genius of Shelley wasted so much of its powers, and from which,

in fact, scarcely any thing he ever wrote is entirely free, (with the exception of the stern drama of the 'Cenci,')—and still more for those fierce and ghastly exaggerations—*ægri somnia*—with which our later poetical literature had teemed, he had no taste or sympathy whatever. Even where dealing with an airy and fanciful theme,—as in the 'Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,'—the Elfin pictures are as clear and distinct as if he had been painting a scene in the Strand or at Exeter Hall; the Tiny Elves flutter and gambol in their appropriate habit, and talk and plead their case before grim and unrelenting Time, with a wonderful air of business-like reality. He chose no theme, in short, till he saw his way clearly to some object; he attempted to paint nothing till he had realized it to his own mind. Generally speaking, therefore, he shunned the visionary and the abstract; he *could* throw himself back into the romance of the past, but his home was naturally among the realities of the present; and his aim was to soften its harsh and rugged features, and to brighten them, as far as they could be brightened, by the cheerful sunshine of poetry.

“The general clearness of view and the decision of purpose which are observable in the treatment of his subjects, can of course only be appreciated by a perusal of them as a whole. But the lively and graphic way in which he presents an image to the mind, [might be illustrated

by a hundred examples.] And with regard to these it may be remarked, that they owe their effect, first, to this—that he never appears to draw his images from books,—presenting merely a reflection from a reflection, but from his own observation of nature; and next, to the great simplicity of expression in which the image is embodied. He knew well that plainness wins us more than eloquence;—therefore he never disdained a homely word if it was the fittest to convey his meaning; and hence an air of originality even in the expression of images which are in themselves of no remarkable novelty. It may be added, too, that the character of their expression changes, as it ought to do, with the nature of the subject; for while in themes like ‘Eugene Aram’s Dream,’ or the ‘Old Elm Tree,’ where the ballad measure is adopted, the diction is of a kindred simplicity; in others, such as the ‘Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,’ and ‘The Two Swans,’ it possesses a quaint and antique solemnity, admitting inversions, compound epithets, and new applications of old words—these last, however, being sparingly employed, though generally with much felicity.

“We have said that the works of Mr. Hood, taking them as a whole, exhibit a combination of genuine poetical excellencies, with not a few defects which enter deeply into their structure, and are likely to be injurious to their permanent popu-

larity; and we have hinted that these defects, which seem inextricably interwoven with his comic poems, and to have colored too deeply his more serious compositions, are traceable to causes over which he had but little control. We allude to the vein of exaggeration, endless digression, and forced conceit, which disfigure the one; and the long-winded accumulation of details, the indisposition, if not the inability, to retrench a single trait of description which in itself appeared susceptible of introduction, that overload and embarrass the other.

“To his comic poems this censure appears to be particularly applicable. His brain teems with humorous fancies, but he cannot afford to part with one. Every quip or crotchet which the train of association suggests, he insists on imparting to the public; and, as might be expected from this indiscriminate effusion, for every stroke really successful we have ten which are forced or unnatural. An absolute Anthology of bad jokes and wretched plays on words, might be compiled from his writings, rich as we at the same time admit them to be in real wit and humor. ‘A quibble is to Shakspeare,’ says Johnson, ‘what luminous vapors are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire.’ What is thus absurdly applied to Shakspeare is literally true of Mr. Hood. Once caught by a

play on words, his course defies calculation: one conceit brings on another, till we lose sight entirely of the point from which we started, and lose at the same time all anxiety to return to it.

“But though it is in his humorous pieces that this tendency to extravagance appears most offensive, even his more serious compositions partake of the same tendency to overload the subject with ‘wasteful and ridiculous excess.’ What, for instance, shall we say of the ‘Haunted House?’ We grant that each feature of the picture, taken by itself, is good; and that the whole has a sombre and sepulchral tone which produces a strong impression on the mind. Had the poem formed the porch to an edifice of like proportions,—had it formed the introduction to some tragic tale of blood,—this long note of preparation might not have been out of place; though even then we should have held that the effect would have been heightened if one half the details had been retrenched. But, standing by itself, and leading to nothing, the long array of dreary imagery simply wearies and fatigues. In like manner, in the ‘Midsummer Fairies,’ there is too great an anxiety shown to exhaust all the views in which the subject can be placed; till, as we listen to the interminable rejoinders, we are tempted to imitate the example of the judge in the *Plaideurs*, and to request that every thing prior to the Deluge may be omitted.

“We trace this tendency, which we regard as the chief drawback to the merits of these poems, and their chances of future popularity, in a great measure, to the unfortunate effects produced by a constant connection with, and dependence on periodical literature. This connection, early begun in Hood’s case, continued through life, not as a matter of choice on his part, but of stern necessity. Now we know few things more adverse to the formation of a great poet, or to the production of works which are to be of an enduring character, than the education which is acquired in such a school. The constantly recurring demands of Periodical Literature are fatal to all deliberation of view,—to all care, or study, or selection of materials; in the case of those who engage in it as a profession. The tale of bricks must be furnished by the appointed day, let the straw be found where it will. Equally adverse is its influence to calmness and repose of manner, and to that breadth and evenness of composition which are the distinguishing characteristics of those works which we regard as the classics of our language. Be wise, instructive, graceful,—natural if you will, is the lesson inculcated by the Genius of periodical literature—but, above all, be *pointed*, be *striking*. Those are the accessories—these last only are essential and indispensable. Hence the current of thought is rarely suffered to flow onward with its natural move-

ment; it must be artificially fretted into foam,—thrown up in epigrammatic jets, or scattered about in sparkling showers of conceits and quibbles.

“How can one educated under such influences be expected to deal with the compositions of the month as he would with works destined for eternity? A certain space must be filled in a given time; and if a fertile mind, prodigal of ideas and images, pours them out before him in such profusion as to enable him to accomplish his task, and do his spiriting gently,—need we wonder that he transfers them to paper without being very solicitous as to their coherence or propriety, provided they present themselves in the garb of novelty, and dazzle the fancy with somewhat picturesque and unexpected? Rather, in the case of Hood, may we wonder that, circumstanced as he was, he has not yielded more frequently to the temptations which the exigencies of periodical literature present; and that, harassed by the daily claims of the present, he has written so much which posterity, after all, will be willing to remember.”

THE PLEA
OF
THE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES.

1827.

VOL. I.

1

TO
CHARLES LAMB.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THANK my literary fortune that I am not reduced, like many better wits, to barter dedications, for the hope or promise of patronage, with some nominally great man; but that where true affection points, and honest respect, I am free to gratify my head and heart by a sincere inscription. An intimacy and dearness, worthy of a much earlier date than our acquaintance can refer to, direct me at once to your name: and with this acknowledgment of your ever kind feeling towards me, I desire to record a respect and admiration for you as a writer, which no one acquainted with our literature, save Elia himself, will think disproportionate or misplaced. If I had not these better reasons to govern me, I should be guided to the same selection by your intense yet critical relish for the works of our great Dramatist, and for that favourite play in particular which has furnished the subject of my verses.

It is my design, in the following Poem, to celebrate by an allegory, that immortality which Shakspeare has conferred on the Fairy mythology by his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. But for him, those pretty children of our childhood would leave barely their names to our maturer years; they belong, as the mites upon the plum, to the bloom of fancy, a thing generally too frail and beautiful to withstand the rude handling of Time: but the Poet has made this most perishable part of the mind's creation equal to the most enduring; he has so

intertwined the Elfin with human sympathies, and linked them by so many delightful associations with the productions of nature, that they are as real to the mind's eye, as their green magical circles to the outer sense.

It would have been a pity for such a race to go extinct, even though they were but as the butterflies that hover about the leaves and blossoms of the visible world.

I am

My dear friend,

Yours most truly,

T. Hood.

THE
PLEA OF THE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES.

I.

'Twas in that mellow season of the year
When the hot Sun sings the yellow leaves
Till they be gold,—and with a broader sphere
The Moon looks down on Ceres and her sheaves ;
When more abundantly the spider weaves,
And the cold wind breathes from a chillier clime ;
That forth I fared, on one of those still eves,
Touch'd with the dewy sadness of the time,
To think how the bright months had spent their
prime.

II.

So that, wherever I address'd my way,
I seem'd to track the melancholy feet
Of him that is the Father of Decay,
And spoils at once the sour weed and the sweet ;—
Wherefore regretfully I made retreat
To some unwasted regions of my brain,
Charm'd with the light of summer and the heat,
And bade that bounteous season bloom again,
And sprout fresh flowers in mine own domain.

III.

It was a shady and sequester'd scene,
Like those famed gardens of Boccaccio,
Planted with his own laurels ever green,
And roses that for endless summer blow ;
And there were fountain springs to overflow
Their marble basins,—and cool green arcades
Of tall o'erarching sycamores, to throw
Athwart the dappled path their dancing shades,—
With timid coneys cropping the green blades.

IV.

And there were crystal pools, peopled with fish,
Argent and gold; and some of Tyrian skin,
Some crimson-barr'd;—and ever at a wish
They rose obsequious till the wave grew thin
As glass upon their backs, and then dived in,
Quenching their ardent scales in watery gloom ;
Whilst others with fresh hues row'd forth to win
My changeable regard,—for so we doom
Things born of thought to vanish or to bloom.

V.

And there were many birds of many dyes,
From tree to tree still faring to and fro,
And stately peacocks with their splendid eyes,
And gorgeous pheasants with their golden glow,
Like Iris just bedabbled in her bow,
Besides some vocalists, without a name,

That oft on fairy errands come and go,
With accents magical ;—and all were tame,
And peckéd at my hand where'er I came.

VI.

And for my sylvan company, in lieu
Of Pampinea with her lively peers,
Sate Queen Titania with her pretty crew,
All in their liveries quaint, with elfin gears,
For she was gracious to my childish years,
And made me free of her enchanted round ;
Wherefore this dreamy scene she still endears,
And plants her court upon a verdant mound,
Fenced with umbrageous woods and groves pro-
found.

VII.

“ Ah me,” she cries, “ was ever moonlight seen
So clear and tender for our midnight trips ?
Go some one forth, and with a trump convene
My lieges all ! ”—Away the goblin skips
A pace or two apart, and deftly strips
The ruddy skin from a sweet rose's cheek,
Then blows the shuddering leaf between his lips,
Making it utter forth a shrill small shriek,
Like a fray'd bird in the gray owlet's beak.

VIII.

And lo ! upon my fix'd delighted ken
Appear'd the loyal Fays.—Some by degrees
Crept from the primrose buds that open'd then,

And some from bell-shaped blossoms like the
bees,

Some from the dewy meads, and rushy leas,
Flew up like chafers when the rustics pass ;
Some from the rivers, others from tall trees
Dropp'd, like shed blossoms, silent to the grass,
Spirits and elfins small, of every class.

IX.

Peri and Pixy, and quaint Puck the Antic,
Brought Robin Goodfellow, that merry swain ;
And stealthy Mab, queen of old realms romantic,
Came too, from distance, in her tiny wain,
Fresh dripping from a cloud—some bloomy rain,
Then circling the bright Moon, had wash'd her
car,

And still bedew'd it with a various stain :
Lastly came Ariel, shooting from a star,
Who bears all fairy embassies afar.

X.

But Oberon, that night elsewhere exiled,
Was absent, whether some distemper'd spleen
Kept him and his fair mate unreconciled,
Or warfare with the Gnome (whose race had been
Sometime obnoxious), kept him from his queen,
And made her now peruse the starry skies
Prophetical with such an absent mien ;
Howbeit, the tears stole often to her eyes,
And oft the Moon was incensed with her sighs—

XI.

Which made the elves sport drearily, and soon
Their hushing dances languish'd to a stand,
Like midnight leaves when, as the Zephyrs swoon,
All on their drooping stems they sink unfann'd,—
So into silence droop'd the fairy band,
To see their empress dear so pale and still,
Crowding her softly round on either hand,
As pale as frosty snow-drops, and as chill,
To whom the sceptred dame reveals her ill.

XII.

“Alas,” quoth she, “ye know our fairy lives
Are leased upon the fickle faith of men;
Not measured out against fate’s mortal knives,
Like human gossamers, we perish when
We fade, and are forgot in worldly ken,—
Though poesy has thus prolong’d our date,
Thanks be to the sweet Bard’s auspicious pen
That rescued us so long!—howbeit of late
I feel some dark misgivings of our fate.

XIII.

“And this dull day my melancholy sleep
Hath been so throng’d with images of woe,
That even now I cannot choose but weep
To think this was some sad prophetic show
Of future horror to befall us so,—
Of mortal wreck and uttermost distress,—

Yea, our poor empire's fall and overthrow,—
For this was my long vision's dreadful stress,
And when I waked my trouble was not less.

XIV.

“Whenever to the clouds I tried to seek,
Such leaden weight dragg'd these Icarian wings,
My faithless wand was wavering and weak,
And slimy toads had trespass'd in our rings—
The birds refused to sing for me—all things
Disown'd their old allegiance to our spells;
The rude bees prick'd me with their rebel stings;
And, when I pass'd, the valley-lily's bells
Rang out, methought, most melancholy knells.

XV.

“And ever on the faint and flagging air
A doleful spirit with a dreary note
Cried in my fearful ear, ‘Prepare! prepare!’
Which soon I knew came from a raven's throat,
Perch'd on a cypress bough not far remote,—
A cursed bird, too crafty to be shot,
That alway cometh with his soot-black coat
To make hearts dreary:—for he is a blot
Upon the book of life, as well ye wot!—

XVI.

“Wherefore some while I bribed him to be
 mute,
With bitter acorns stuffing his foul maw,

Which barely I appeased, when some fresh
 bruit
Startled me all aheap!—and soon I saw
The horridest shape that ever raised my awe,—
A monstrous giant, very huge and tall,
Such as in elder times, devoid of law,
With wicked might grieved the primeval ball,
And this was sure the deadliest of them all!

XVII.

“ Gaunt was he as a wolf of Languedoc,
With bloody jaws, and frost upon his crown;
So from his barren poll one hoary lock
Over his wrinkled front fell far adown,
Well nigh to where his frosty brows did frown
Like jagged icicles at cottage eaves;
And for his coronal he wore some brown
And bristled ears gather’d from Ceres’ sheaves,
Entwined with certain sere and russet leaves.

XVIII.

“ And lo! upon a mast rear’d far aloft,
He bore a very bright and crescent blade,
The which he waved so dreadfully, and oft,
In meditative spite, that, sore dismay’d,
I crept into an acorn-cup for shade;
Meanwhile the horrid effigy went by:
I trow his look was dreadful, for it made
The trembling birds betake them to the sky,
For every leaf was lifted by his sigh.

XIX.

“And ever as he sigh’d, his foggy breath
Blurr’d out the landscape like a flight of smoke:
Thence knew I this was either dreary Death
Or Time, who leads all creatures to his stroke.
Ah wretched me!”—Here, even as she spoke,
The melancholy Shape came gliding in,
And lean’d his back against an antique oak,
Folding his wings, that were so fine and thin,
They scarce were seen against the Dryad’s skin.

XX.

Then what a fear seized all the little rout!
Look how a flock of panic’d sheep will stare—
And huddle close—and start—and wheel about,
Watching the roaming mongrel here and there,—
So did that sudden Apparition scare
All close aheap those small affrighted things;
Nor sought they now the safety of the air,
As if some leaden spell withheld their wings;
But who can fly that ancientest of Kings?

XXI.

Whom now the Queen, with a forestalling tear
And previous sigh, beginneth to entreat,
Bidding him spare, for love, her lieges dear:
“Alas!” quoth she, “is there no nodding wheat
Ripe for thy crooked weapon, and more meet,—
Or wither’d leaves to ravish from the tree,—

Or crumbling battlements for thy defeat?
Think but what vaunting monuments there be
Built in spite and mockery of thee.

XXII.

“O fret away the fabric walls of Fame,
And grind down marble Cæsars with the dust :
Make tombs inscriptionless—raze each high name,
And waste old armours of renown with rust :
Do all of this, and thy revenge is just :
Make such decays the trophies of thy prime,
And check Ambition’s overweening lust,
That dares exterminating war with Time,—
But we are guiltless of that lofty crime.

XXIII.

“Frail feeble sprites !—the children of a dream !
Leased on the sufferance of fickle men,
Like motes dependent on the sunny beam,
Living but in the sun’s indulgent ken,
And when that light withdraws, withdrawing
 then ;—
So do we flutter in the glance of youth
And fervid fancy,—and so perish when
The eye of faith grows aged ;—in sad truth,
Feeling thy sway, O Time ! though not thy tooth

XXIV.

‘Where be those old divinities forlorn,
That dwelt in trees, or haunted in a stream ?

Alas! their memories are dimm'd and torn.
Like the remainder tatters of a dream :
So will it fare with our poor thrones, I deem ;—
For us the same dark trench Oblivion delves,
That holds the wastes of every human scheme.
O spare us then,—and these our pretty elves,
We soon, alas! shall perish of ourselves!”

XXV.

Now as she ended, with a sigh, to name
Those old Olympians, scatter'd by the whirl
Of fortune's giddy wheel and brought to shame,
Methought a scornful and malignant curl
Show'd on the lips of that malicious churl,
To think what noble havocs he had made ;
So that I fear'd he all at once would hurl
The harmless fairies into endless shade,—
Howbeit he stopp'd awhile to whet his blade.

XXVI.

Pity it was to hear the elfins' wail
Rise up in concert from their mingled dread ;
Pity it was to see them, all so pale,
Gaze on the grass as for a dying bed ;—
But Puck was seated on a spider's thread,
That hung between two branches of a briar,
And 'gan to swing and gambol heels o'er head,
Like any Southwark tumbler on a wire,
For him no present grief could long inspire.

XXVII.

Meanwhile the Queen with many piteous drops,
Falling like tiny sparks full fast and free,
Bedews a pathway from her throne ;—and stops
Before the foot of her arch enemy,
And with her little arms enfolds his knee,
That shows more gristly from that fair embrace ;
But she will ne'er depart. “Alas !” quoth she,
“ My painful fingers I will here enlace
Till I have gain'd your pity for our race.

XXVIII.

“ What have we ever done to earn this grudge,
And hate—(if not too humble for thy hating?)—
Look o'er our labours and our lives, and judge
If there be any ills of our creating ;
For we are very kindly creatures, dating
With nature's charities still sweet and bland :—
O think this murder worthy of debating !”—
Herewith she makes a signal with her hand,
To beckon some one from the Fairy band.

XXIX.

Anon I saw one of those elfin things,
Clad all in white like any chorister,
Come fluttering forth on his melodious wings,
That made soft music at each little stir,
But something louder than a bee's demur
Before he lights upon a bunch of broom,

And thus 'gan he with Saturn to confer,—
And O his voice was sweet, touch'd with the gloom
Of that sad theme that argued of his doom !

XXX.

Quoth he, " We make all melodies our care,
That no false discords may offend the Sun,
Music's great master—tuning everywhere
All pastoral sounds and melodies, each one
Duly to place and season, so that none
May harshly interfere. We rouse at morn
The shrill sweet lark ; and when the day is done,
Hush silent pauses for the bird forlorn,
That singeth with her breast against a thorn.

XXXI.

" We gather in loud choirs the twittering race,
That make a chorus with their single note ;
And tend on new-fledged birds in every place,
That duly they may get their tunes by rote ;
And oft, like echoes, answering remote,
We hide in thickets from the feather'd throng,
And strain in rivalry each throbbing throat,
Singing in shrill responses all day long,
Whilst the glad truant listens to our song.

XXXII.

" Wherefore, great King of Years, as thou dost
love
The raining music from a morning cloud,

When vanish'd larks are carolling above,
To wake Apollo with their pipings loud ;—
If ever thou hast heard in leafy shroud
The sweet and plaintive Sappho of the dell,
Show thy sweet mercy on this little crowd,
And we will muffle up the sheepfold bell
Whene'er thou listenest to Philomel."

XXXIII.

Then Saturn thus :—" Sweet is the merry lark,
That carols in man's ear so clear and strong ;
And youth must love to listen in the dark
That tuneful elegy of Tereus' wrong ;
But I have heard that ancient strain too long,
For sweet is sweet but when a little strange,
And I grow weary for some newer song ;
For wherefore had I wings, unless to range
Through all things mutable from change to change ?

XXXIV.

"But wouldst thou hear the melodies of Time,
Listen when sleep and drowsy darkness roll
Over hush'd cities, and the midnight chime .
Sounds from their hundred clocks, and deep bells
toll

Like a last knell over the dead world's soul,
Saying, Time shall be final of all things,
Whose late, last voice must elegize the whole,—
O then I clap aloft my brave broad wings,
And make the wide air tremble while it rings !"

XXXV.

Then next a fair Eve-Fay made meek address,
Saying, "We be the handmaids of the Spring,
In sign whereof, May, the quaint broideress,
Hath wrought her samplers on our gauzy wing.
We tend upon buds' birth and blossoming,
And count the leafy tributes that they owe—
As, so much to the earth—so much to fling
In showers to the brook—so much to go
In whirlwinds to the clouds that made them grow.

XXXVI.

"The pastoral cowslips are our little pets,
And daisy stars, whose firmament is green ;
Pansies, and those veil'd nuns, meek violets,
Sighing to that warm world from which they screen ;
And golden daffodils, pluck'd for May's Queen ;
And lonely harebells, quaking on the heath ;
And Hyacinth, long since a fair youth seen,
Whose tuneful voice, turn'd fragrance in his breath,
Kiss'd by sad Zephyr, guilty of his death.

XXXVII.

"The widow'd primrose weeping to the moon,
And saffron crocus in whose chalice bright
A cool libation hoarded for the noon
Is kept—and she that purifies the light,
The virgin lily, faithful to her white,
Whereon Eve wept in Eden for her shame ;

And the most dainty rose, Aurora's spright,
Our every godchild, by whatever name—
Spare us our lives, for we did nurse the same !”

XXXVIII.

Then that old Mower stamp'd his heel, and struck
His hurtful scythe against the harmless ground,
Saying, “ Ye foolish imps, when am I stuck
With gaudy buds, or like a wooer crown'd
With flow'ry chaplets, save when they are found
Wither'd?—Whenever have I pluck'd a rose,
Except to scatter its vain leaves around?
For so all gloss of beauty I oppose,
And bring decay on every flow'r that blows.

XXXIX.

“ Or when am I so wroth as when I view
The wanton pride of Summer;—how she decks
The birth-day world with blossoms ever new,
As if Time had not lived, and heap'd great wrecks
Of years on years?—O then I bravely vex
And catch the gay Months in their gaudy plight,
And slay them with the wreaths about their
 necks,
Like foolish heifers in the holy rite,
And raise great trophies to my ancient might !”

XL.

Then saith another, “ We are kindly things,
And like her offspring nestle with the dove,—

Witness these hearts embroider'd on our wings,
To show our constant patronage of love :—
We sit at even, in sweet bow'rs above
Lovers, and shake rich odours on the air,
To mingle with their sighs ; and still remove
The startling owl, and bid the bat forbear
Their privacy, and haunt some other where.

XLI.

“And we are near the mother when she sits
Beside her infant in its wicker bed ;
And we are in the fairy scene that flits
Across its tender brain : sweet dreams we shed,
And whilst the little merry soul is fled
Away, to sport with our young elves, the while
We touch the dimpled cheek with roses red,
And tickle the soft lips until they smile,
So that their careful parents they beguile.

XLII.

“ O then, if ever thou hast breathed a vow
At Love's dear portal, or at pale moon-rise
Crush'd the dear curl on a regardful brow
That did not frown thee from thy honey prize—
If ever thy sweet son sat on thy thighs,
And woo'd thee from thy careful thoughts within
To watch the harmless beauty of his eyes,
Or glad thy fingers on his smooth soft skin,
For Love's dear sake, let us thy pity win ! ”

XLIII.

Then Saturn fiercely thus :—"What joy have I
In tender babes, that have devour'd mine own,
Whenever to the light I heard them cry,
Till foolish Rhea cheated me with stone?
Whereon, till now, is my great hunger shown,
In monstrous dints of my enormous tooth;
And,—but the peopled world is too full grown
For hunger's edge,—I would consume all youth
At one great meal, without delay or ruth!

XLIV.

"For I am well nigh crazed and wild to hear
How boastful fathers taunt me with their breed,
Saying, 'We shall not die nor disappear,
But in these other selves, ourselves succeed,
Ev'n as ripe flowers pass into their seed'
Only to be renew'd from prime to prime,'
All of which boastings I am forced to read,
Besides a thousand challenges to Time
Which bragging lovers have compiled in rhyme.

XLV.

"Wherefore, when they are sweetly met o' nights,
There will I steal, and with my hurried hand
Startle them suddenly from their delights
Before their next encounter hath been plann'd,
Ravishing hours in little minutes spann'd;
But when they say farewell, and grieve apart,

Then like a leaden statue I will stand,
Meanwhile their many tears incrust my dart,
And with a ragged edge cut heart from heart."

XLVI.

Then next a merry Woodsman, clad in green,
Stept vanward from his mates, that idly stood
Each at his proper ease, as they had been
Nursed in the liberty of old Shérwood,
And wore the livery of Robin Hood,
Who wont in forest shades to dine and sup,—
So came this chief right frankly, and made good
His haunch against his axe, and thus spoke up,
Doffing his cap, which was an acorn's cup:—

XLVII.

"We be small foresters and gay, who tend
On trees and all their furniture of green,
Training the young boughs airily to bend,
And show blue snatches of the sky between;—
Or knit more close intricacies, to screen
Birds' crafty dwellings as may hide them best,
But most the timid blackbird's—she, that seen,
Will bear black poisonous berries to her nest,
Lest man should cage the darlings of her breast.

XLVIII.

"We bend each tree in proper attitude,
And founting willows train in silvery falls;
We frame all shady roofs and arches rude,

And verdant aisles leading to Dryads' halls,
Or deep recesses where the Echo calls ;—
We shape all plummy trees against the sky,
And carve tall elms' Corinthian capitals,—
When sometimes, as our tiny hatchets ply,
Men say, the tapping woodpecker is nigh.

XLIX.

“ Sometimes we scoop the squirrel's hollow cell,
And sometimes carve quaint letters on trees'
 rind,
That haply some lone musing wight may spell
Dainty Aminta,—Gentle Rosalind,—
Or chastest Laura,—sweetly call'd to mind
In sylvan solitudes, ere he lies down ;—
And sometimes we enrich gray stems, with twined
And vagrant ivy,—or rich moss, whose brown
Burns into gold as the warm sun goes down.

L.

“ And, lastly, for mirth's sake and Christmas
 cheer,
We bear the seedling berries, for increase,
To graft the Druid oaks, from year to year,
Careful that mistletoe may never cease ;—
Wherefore, if thou dost prize the shady peace
Of sombre forests, or to see light break
Through sylvan cloisters, and in spring release
Thy spirit amongst leaves from careful ake,
Spare us our lives for the Green Dryad's sake.”

LI.

Then Saturn, with a frown:—"Go forth, and
fell

Oak for your coffins, and thenceforth lay by
Your axes for the rust, and bid farewell
To all sweet birds, and the blue peeps of sky
Through tangled branches, for ye shall not spy
The next green generation of the tree ;
But hence with the dead leaves, whene'er they
fly,—

Which in the bleak air I would rather see,
Than flights of the most tuneful birds that be.

LII.

"For I dislike all prime, and verdant pets,
Ivy except, that on the aged wall
Preys with its worm-like roots, and daily frets
The crumbled tower it seems to league withal,
King-like, worn down by its own coronal:—
Neither in forest haunts love I to won,
Before the golden plumage 'gins to fall,
And leaves the brown bleak limbs with few leaves
on,
Or bare—like Nature in her skeleton.

LIII.

"For then sit I amongst the crooked boughs,
Wooing dull Memory with kindred sighs ;
And there in rustling nuptials we espouse,

Smit by the sadness in each other's eyes ;—
But Hope must have green bowers and blue
 skies,
And must be courted with the gauds of spring ;
Whilst Youth leans god-like on her lap, and
 cries,
What shall we always do, but love and sing ?—
And Time is reckon'd a discarded thing."

LIV.

Here in my dream it made me fret to see
How Puck, the antic, all this dreary while
Had blithely jested with calamity,
With mistimed mirth mocking the doleful style
Of his sad comrades, till it raised my bile
To see him so reflect their grief aside,
Turning their solemn looks to half a smile—
Like a straight stick shown crooked in the tide ;—
But soon a novel advocate I spied.

LV.

Quoth he—" We teach all natures to fulfil
Their fore-appointed crafts, and instincts meet,—
The bee's sweet alchemy,—the spider's skill,—
The pismire's care to garner up his wheat,—
And rustic masoury to swallows fleet,—
The lapwing's cunning to preserve her nest,—
But most, that lesser pelican, the sweet
And shrilly ruddock, with its bleeding breast,
Its tender pity of poor babes distrest.

LVI.

“Sometimes we cast our shapes, and in sleek skins
Delve with the timid mole, that aptly delves
From our example ; so the spider spins,
And eke the silk-worm, pattern'd by ourselves.
Sometimes we travail on the summer shelves
Of early bees, and busy toils commence,
Watch'd of wise men, that know not we are elves,
But gaze and marvel at our stretch of sense,
And praise our human-like intelligence.

LVII.

“Wherefore, by thy delight in that old tale,
And plaintive dirges the late robins sing,
What time the leaves are scatter'd by the gale,
Mindful of that old forest burying ;—
As thou dost love to watch each tiny thing,
For whom our craft most curiously contrives,
If thou hast caught a bee upon the wing,
To take his honey-bag,—spare us our lives,
And we will pay the ransom in full hives.”

LVIII.

“Now by my glass,” quoth Time, “ye do offend
In teaching the brown bees that careful lore,
And frugal ants, whose millions would have end,
But they lay up for need a timely store,
And travail with the seasons evermore ;
Whereas Great Mammoth long hath pass'd away,

And none but I can tell what hide he wore ;
Whilst purblind men, the creatures of a day,
In riddling wonder his great bones survey."

LIX.

Then came an elf, right beauteous to behold,
Whose coat was like a brooklet that the sun
Hath all embroider'd with its crooked gold,
It was so quaintly wrought and overrun
With spangled traceries,—most meet for one
That was a warden of the pearly streams ;—
And as he stept out of the shadows dun,
His jewels sparkled in the pale moon's gleams,
And shot into the air their pointed beams.

LX.

Quoth he,—“ We bear the gold and silver keys
Of bubbling springs and fountains, that below
Course thro' the veiny earth,—which when they
freeze

Into hard crysolites, we bid to flow,
Creeping like subtle snakes, when, as they go,
We guide their windings to melodious falls,
At whose soft murmurings, so sweet and low,
Poets have tuned their smoothest madrigals,
To sing to ladies in their banquet halls.

LXI.

“And when the hot sun with his steadfast heat
Parches the river god,—whose dusty urn

Drips miserly, till soon his crystal feet
 Against his pebbly floor wax faint and burn,
 And languid fish, unpoised, grow sick and yearn,—
 Then scoop we hollows in some sandy nook,
 And little channels dig, wherein we turn
 The thread-worn rivulet, that all forsook
 The Naiad-lily, pining for her brook.

LXII.

“Wherefore, by thy delight in cool green meads,
 With living sapphires daintily inlaid,—
 In all soft songs of waters and their reeds,—
 And all reflections in a streamlet made,
 Haply of thy own love, that, disarray’d,
 Kills the fair lily with a livelier white,—
 By silver trouts upspringing from green shade,
 And winking stars reduplicate at night,
 Spare us, poor ministers to such delight.”

LXIII.

Howbeit his pleading and his gentle looks
 Moved not the spiteful Shade :—Quoth he, “Your
 taste
 Shoots wide of mine, for I despise the brooks
 And slavish rivulets that run to waste
 In noontide sweats, or, like poor vassals, haste
 To swell the vast dominion of the sea,
 In whose great presence I am held disgraced,
 And neighbour’d with a king that rivals me
 In ancient might and hoary majesty.

LXIV.

“Whereas I ruled in Chaos, and still keep
The awful secrets of that ancient dearth,
Before the briny fountains of the deep
Brimm’d up the hollow cavities of earth ;—
I saw each trickling Sea-God at his birth,
Each pearly Naiad with her oozy locks,
And infant Titans of enormous girth,
Whose huge young feet yet stumbled on the
rocks,
Stunning the early world with frequent shocks.

LXV.

“Where now is Titan, with his cumbrous brood,
That scared the world?—By this sharp scythe
they fell,
And half the sky was curdled with their blood.
So have all primal giants sigh’d farewell.
No Wardens now by sedgy fountains dwell,
Nor pearly Naiads. All their days are done
That strove with Time, untimely, to excel ;
Wherefore I razed their progenies, and none
But my great shadow intercepts the sun !”

LXVI.

Then saith the timid Fay—“Oh, mighty Time !
Well hast thou wrought the cruel Titans’ fall,
For they were stain’d with many a bloody
crime :

Great giants work great wrongs,—but we are
small,
For love goes lowly ;—but Oppressions 's tall,
And with surpassing strides goes foremost still
Where love indeed can hardly reach at all ;
Like a poor dwarf o'erburthen'd with good
will,
That labours to efface the tracks of ill.—

LXVII.

“Man even strives with Man, but we eschew
The guilty feud, and all fierce strifes abhor ;
Nay, we are gentle as the sweet heaven's dew,
Beside the red and horrid drops of war,
Weeping the cruel hates men battle for,
Which worldly bosoms nourish in our spite :
For in the gentle breast we ne'er withdraw,
But only when all love hath taken flight,
And youth's warm gracious heart is harden'd
quite.

LXVIII.

“So are our gentle natures intertwined
With sweet humanities, and closely knit
In kindly sympathy with human kind.
Witness how we befriend, with elfin wit,
All hopeless maids and lovers,—nor omit
Magical succours unto hearts forlorn :—
We charm man's life, and do not perish it ;—
So judge us by the helps we show'd this morn,
To one who held his wretched days in scorn.

LXIX.

"'Twas nigh sweet Amwell;—for the Queen had
task'd

Our skill to-day amidst the silver Lea,
Whereon the noontide sun had not yet bask'd;
Wherefore some patient man we thought to see,
Planted in moss-grown rushes to the knee,
Beside the cloudy margin cold and dim;—
Howbeit no patient fisherman was he
That cast his sudden shadow from the brim,
Making us leave our toils to gaze on him.

LXX.

"His face was ashy pale, and leaden care
Had sunk the levell'd arches of his brow,
Once bridges for his joyous thoughts to fare
Over those melancholy springs and slow,
That from his piteous eyes began to flow,
And fell anon into the chilly stream;
Which, as his mimick'd image show'd below,
Wrinkled his face with many a needless seam,
Making grief sadder in its own esteem.

LXXI.

"And lo! upon the air we saw him stretch
His passionate arms; and, in a wayward strain,
He 'gan to elegize that fellow wretch
That with mute gestures answer'd him again,
Saying, ' Poor slave, how long wilt thou remain

Life's sad weak captive in a prison strong,
Hoping with tears to rust away thy chain,
In bitter servitude to worldly wrong?—
Thou wear'st that mortal livery too long!

LXXII.

“This, with more spleenful speeches and some tears,
When he had spent upon the imaged wave,
Speedily I convened my elfin peers
Under the lily-cups, that we might save
This woful mortal from a wilful grave
By shrewd diversions of his mind's regret,
Seeing he was mere melauncholy's slave,
That sank wherever a dark cloud he met,
And straight was tangled in her secret net.

LXXIII.

“Therefore, as still he watch'd the water's flow,
Daintily we transform'd, and with bright fins
Came glancing through the gloom; some from below
Rose like dim fancies when a dream begins,
Snatching the light upon their purple skins;
Then under the broad leaves made slow retire:
One like a golden galley bravely wins
Its radiant course,—another glows like fire,—
Making that wayward man our pranks admire.

LXXIV.

“And so he banish'd thought, and quite forgot
All contemplation of that wretched face;

And so we wiled him from that lonely spot
 Along the river's brink ; till, by heaven's grace,
 He met a gentle haunter of the place,
 Full of sweet wisdom gather'd from the brooks,
 Who there discuss'd his melancholy case
 With wholesome texts learn'd from kind nature's
 books,
 Meanwhile he newly trimm'd his lines and hooks."

LXXV.

Herewith the Fairy ceased. Quoth Ariel now—
 "Let me remember how I saved a man,
 Whose fatal noose was fasten'd on a bough,
 Intended to abridge his sad life's span ;
 For haply I was by when he began
 His stern soliloquy in life's dispraise,
 And overheard his melancholy plan,
 How he had made a vow to end his days,
 And therefore follow'd him in all his ways,

LXXVI.

"Through brake and tangled copse, for much he
 loathed
 All populous haunts, and roam'd in forests rude,
 To hide himself from man. But I had clothed
 My delicate limbs with plumes, and still pur-
 sued,
 Where only foxes and wild cats intrude,
 Till we were come beside an ancient tree
 Late blasted by a storm. Here he renew'd

His loud complaints,—choosing that spot to be
The scene of his last horrid tragedy.

LXXVII.

“It was a wild and melancholy glen,
Made gloomy by tall firs and cypress dark,
Whose roots, like any bones of buried men,
Push’d through the rotten sod for fear’s remark ;
A hundred horrid stems, jagged and stark,
Wrestled with crooked arms in hideous fray,
Besides sleek ashes with their dappled bark,
Like crafty serpents climbing for a prey,
With many blasted oaks moss-grown and gray.

LXXVIII.

“But here upon his final desperate clause
Suddenly I pronounced so sweet a strain,
Like a pang’d nightingale it made him pause,
Till half the frenzy of his grief was slain,
The sad remainder oozing from his brain
In timely ecstasies of healing tears,
Which through his ardent eyes began to drain ;—
Meanwhile the deadly Fates unclosed their
 shears :—
So pity me and all my fated peers !”

LXXIX.

Thus Ariel ended, and was some time hush’d :
When with the hoary shape a fresh tongue pleads,
And red as rose the gentle Fairy blush’d

To read the record of her own good deeds :—
 “It chanced,” quoth she, “in seeking through the
 meads

For honeyed cowslips, sweetest in the morn,
 Whilst yet the buds were hung with dewy beads,
 And Echo answer’d to the huntsman’s horn,
 We found a babe left in the swarths forlorn.

LXXX.

“A little, sorrowful, deserted thing,
 Begot of love, and yet no love begetting;
 Guiltless of shame, and yet for shame to wring;
 And too soon banish’d from a mother’s petting,
 To churlish nurture and the wide world’s fretting,
 For alien pity and unnatural care ;—
 Alas ! to see how the cold dew kept wetting
 His childish coats, and dabbled all his hair,
 Like gossamers across his forehead fair.

LXXXI.

“His pretty pouting mouth, witless of speech,
 Lay half-way open like a rose-lipp’d shell;
 And his young cheek was softer than a peach,
 Whereon his tears, for roundness, could not
 dwell,
 But quickly roll’d themselves to pearls, and fell,
 Some on the grass, and some against his hand,
 Or haply wander’d to the dimpled well,
 Which love beside his mouth had sweetly plann’d,
 Yet not for tears, but mirth and smilings bland.

LXXXII.

“Pity it was to see those frequent tears
Falling regardless from his friendless eyes ;
There was such beauty in those twin blue spheres,
As any mother’s heart might leap to prize ;
Blue were they, like the zenith of the skies
Softened betwixt two clouds, both clear and mild ;—
Just touch’d with thought, and yet not over wise,
They show’d the gentle spirit of a child,
Not yet by care or any craft defiled.

LXXXIII.

“Pity it was to see the ardent sun
Scorching his helpless limbs—it shone so warm ;
For kindly shade or shelter he had none,
Nor mother’s gentle breast, come fair or storm.
Meanwhile I bade my pitying mates transform
Like grasshoppers, and then, with shrilly cries,
All round the infant noisily we swarm,
Haply some passing rustic to advise—
Whilst providential Heaven our care espies,

LXXXIV.

“And sends full soon a tender-hearted hind,
Who, wond’ring at our loud unusual note,
Strays curiously aside, and so doth find
The orphan child laid in the grass remote,
And laps the foundling in his russet coat,
Who thence was nurtured in his kindly cot :—

But how he prosper'd let proud London quote,
How wise, how rich, and how renown'd he got,
And chief of all her citizens, I wot.

LXXXV.

“ Witness his goodly vessels on the Thames,
Whose holds were fraught with costly merchandise,—

Jewels from Ind, and pearls for courtly dames,
And gorgeous silks that Samarcand supplies :
Witness that Royal Bourse he bade arise,
The mart of merchants from the East and West ;
Whose slender summit, pointing to the skies,
Still bears, in token of his grateful breast,
The tender grasshopper, his chosen crest—

LXXXVI.

“ The tender grasshopper, his chosen crest,
That all the summer, with a tuneful wing,
Makes merry chirpings in its grassy nest,
Inspirited with dew to leap and sing :—
So let us also live, eternal King !
Partakers of the green and pleasant earth :—
Pity it is to slay the meanest thing,
That, like a mote, shines in the smile of mirth :—
Enough there is of joy's decrease and dearth !

LXXXVII.

“ Enough of pleasure, and delight, and beauty,
Perish'd and gone, and hasting to decay ;—

Enough to sadden even thee, whose duty
Or spite it is to havoc and to slay :
Too many a lovely race razed quite away,
Hath left large gaps in life and human loving :—
Here then begin thy cruel war to stay,
And spare fresh sighs, and tears, and groans,
 reproving
Thy desolating hand for our removing.”

LXXXVIII.

Now here I heard a shrill and sudden cry,
And looking up, I saw the antic Puck
Grappling with Time, who clutch'd him like a fly,
Victim of his own sport,—the jester's luck !
He, whilst his fellows grieved, poor wight, had
 stuck
His freakish gauds upon the Ancient's brow,
And now his ear, and now his beard, would
 pluck ;
Whereas the angry churl had snatch'd him now,
Crying, “ Thou impish mischief, who art thou ? ”

LXXXIX.

“ Alas ! ” quoth Puck, “ a little random elf,
Born in the sport of nature, like a weed,
For simple sweet enjoyment of myself,
But for no other purpose, worth, or need ;
And yet withal of a most happy breed ;
And there is Robin Goodfellow besides,
My partner dear in many a prankish deed

To make dame Laughter hold her jolly sides,
Like merry mummers twain on holy tides.

XC.

“ ’Tis we that bob the angler’s idle cork,
Till e’en the patient man breathes half a curse ;
We steal the morsel from the gossip’s fork,
And curdling looks with secret straws disperse,
Or stop the sneezing chanter at mid verse :
And when an infant’s beauty prospers ill,
We change, some mothers say, the child at
nurse
But any graver purpose to fulfil,
We have not wit enough, and scarce the will.

XCI.

“ We never let the canker melancholy
To gather on our faces like a rust,
But gloss our features with some change of
folly,
Taking life’s fabled miseries on trust,
But only sorrowing when sorrow must :
We ruminate no sage’s solemn cud,
But own ourselves a pinch of lively dust
To frisk upon a wind,—whereas the flood
Of tears would turn us into heavy mud.

XCII.

“ Beshrew those sad interpreters of nature,
Who gloze her lively universal law,

As if she had not form'd our cheerful feature
To be so tickled with the slightest straw !
So let them vex their mumping mouths, and
draw

The corners downward, like a wat'ry moon,
And deal in gusty sighs and rainy flaw—
We will not woo foul weather all too soon,
Or nurse November on the lap of June.

XCIII.

“ For ours are winging sprites, like any bird,
That shun all stagnant settlements of grief ;
And even in our rest our hearts are stirr'd,
Like insects settled on a dancing leaf :—
This is our small philosophy in brief,
Which thus to teach hath set me all agape :
But dost thou relish it ? O hoary chief !
Unclasp thy crooked fingers from my nape,
And I will show thee many a pleasant scrape.”

XCIV.

Then Saturn thus :—shaking his crooked blade
O'erhead, which made aloft a lightning flash
In all the fairies' eyes, dismally fray'd !
His ensuing voice came like the thunder crash—
Meanwhile the bolt shatters some pine or ash—
“ Thou feeble, wanton, foolish, fickle thing !
Whom nought can frighten, sadden, or abash,—
To hope my solemn countenance to wring
To idiot smiles !—but I will prune thy wing !

XCV.

“ Lo ! this most awful handle of my scythe
Stood once a May-pole, with a flowery crown,
Which rustics danced around, and maidens blithe,
To wanton pipings;—but I pluck’d it down,
And robed the May Queen in a churchyard gown,
Turning her buds to rosemary and rue ;
And all their merry minstrelsy did drown,
And laid each lusty leaper in the dew ;—
So thou shalt fare—and every jovial crew ! ”

XCVI.

Here he lets go the struggling imp, to clutch
His mortal engine with each grisly hand,
Which frights the elfin progeny so much,
They huddle in a heap, and trembling stand
All round Titania, like the queen bee’s band,
With sighs and tears and very shrieks of woe !—
Meanwhile, some moving argument I plann’d,
To make the stern Shade merciful,—when lo !
He drops his fatal scythe without a blow !

XCVII.

For, just at need, a timely Apparition
Steps in between, to bear the awful brunt ;
Making him change his horrible position,
To marvel at this comer, brave and blunt,
That dares Time’s irresistible affront,
Whose strokes have scarr’d even the gods of old ;—

Whereas this seem'd a mortal, at mere hunt
For coneys, lighted by the moonshine cold,
Or stalker of stray deer, stealthy and bold.

XCVIII.

Who, turning to the small assembled fays,
Doffs to the lily queen his courteous cap,
And holds her beauty for a while in gaze,
With bright eyes kindling at this pleasant hap ;
And thence upon the fair moon's silver map,
As if in question of this magic chance,
Laid like a dream upon the green earth's lap ;
And then upon old Saturn turns askance,
Exclaiming, with a glad and kindly glance :—

XCIX.

“Oh, these be Fancy's revellers by night !
Stealthy companions of the downy moth—
Diana's motes, that flit in her pale light,
Shunners of sunbeams in diurnal sloth ;—
These be the feasters on night's silver cloth,—
The gnat with shrilly trump is their convener,
Forth from their flowery chambers, nothing loth,
With lulling tunes to charm the air serener,
Or dance upon the grass to make it greener.

C.

“These be the pretty genii of the flow'rs,
Daintily fed with honey and pure dew—
Midsummer's phantoms in her dreaming hours,

King Oberon, and all his merry crew,
The darling puppets of romance's view ;
Fairies, and sprites, and goblin elves we call
 them,
Famous for patronage of lovers true;—
No harm they act, neither shall harm befall them,
So do not thus with crabbed frowns appall them."

CI.

O what a cry was Saturn's then !—it made
The fairies quake. "What care I for their pranks,
However they may lovers choose to aid,
Or dance their roundelays on flow'ry banks ?—
Long must they dance before they earn my
 thanks,—
So step aside, to some far safer spot,
Whilst with my hungry scythe I mow their ranks,
And leave them in the sun, like weeds, to rot,
And with the next day's sun to be forgot."

CII.

Anon, he raised afresh his weapon keen ;
But still the gracious Shade disarm'd his aim,
Stepping with brave alacrity between,
And made his sere arm powerless and tame.
His be perpetual glory, for the shame
Of hoary Saturn in that grand defeat !—
But I must tell, how here Titania came
With all her kneeling lieges, to entreat
His kindly succour, in sad tones, but sweet.

CIII.

Saying, "Thou seest a wretched queen before
thee,

The fading power of a failing land,
Who for her kingdom kneeleth to implore thee,
Now menaced by this tyrant's spoiling hand ;
No one but thee can hopefully withstand
That crooked blade, he longeth so to lift.
I pray thee blind him with his own vile sand,
Which only times all ruins by its drift,
Or prune his eagle wings that are so swift.

CIV.

"Or take him by that sole and grizzled tuft,
That hangs upon his bald and barren crown ;
And we will sing to see him so rebuff'd,
And lend our little mights to pull him down,
And make brave sport of his malicious frown,
For all his boastful mockery o'er men.
For thou wast born I know for this renown,
By my most magical and inward ken,
That readeth ev'n at Fate's forestalling pen.

CV.

"Nay, by the golden lustre of thine eye,
And by thy brow's most fair and ample span,
Thought's glorious palace, framed for fancies high,
And by thy cheek thus passionately wan,
I know the signs of an immortal man,—

Nature's chief darling, and illustrious mate,
Destined to foil old Death's oblivious plan,
And shine untarnish'd by the fogs of Fate,
Time's famous rival till the final date!

CVI.

"O shield us then from this usurping Time,
And we will visit thee in moonlight dreams;
And teach thee tunes, to wed unto thy rhyme,
And dance about thee in all midnight gleams,
Giving thee glimpses of our magic schemes,
Such as no mortal's eye hath ever seen;
And, for thy love to us in our extremes,
Will ever keep thy chaplet fresh and green,
Such as no poet's wreath hath ever been!

CVII.

"And we'll distil thee aromatic dew,
To charm thy sense, when there shall be no flow'rs;
And flavour'd syrups in thy drinks infuse,
And teach the nightingale to haunt thy bow'rs,
And with our games divert thy weariest hours,
With all that elfin wits can e'er devise.
And, this churl dead, there'll be no hasting hours
To rob thee of thy joys, as now joy flies:"—
Here she was stopp'd by Saturn's furious cries.

CVIII.

Whom, therefore, the kind Shade rebukes anew,
Saying, "Thou haggard Sin, go forth, and scoop

Thy hollow coffin in some churchyard yew,
Or make th' autumnal flow'rs turn pale, and
 droop ;
Or fell the bearded corn, till gleaners stoop
Under fat sheaves,—or blast the piny grove ;—
But here thou shalt not harm this pretty group,
Whose lives are not so frail and feebly wove,
But leased on Nature's loveliness and love.

CIX.

“’Tis these that free the small entangled fly,
Caught in the venom’d spider’s crafty snare ;—
These be the petty surgeons that apply
The healing balsams to the wounded hare,
Bedded in bloody fern, no creature’s care !—
These be providers for the orphan brood,
Whose tender mother hath been slain in air,
Quitting with gaping bill her darlings’ food,
Hard by the verge of her domestic wood.

CX.

“’Tis these befriend the timid trembling stag,
When, with a bursting heart beset with fears,
He feels his saving speed begin to flag ;
For then they quench the fatal taint with tears,
And prompt fresh shifts in his alarum’d ears,
So piteously they view all bloody morts ;
Or if the gunner, with his arm, appears,
Like noisy pyes and jays, with harsh reports,
They warn the wild fowl of his deadly sports.

CXI.

“ For these are kindly ministers of nature,
To soothe all covert hurts and dumb distress ;
Pretty they be, and very small of stature,—
For mercy still consorts with littleness ;—
Wherefore the sum of good is still the less,
And mischief grossest in this world of wrong ;—
So do these charitable dwarfs redress
The tenfold ravages of giants strong,
To whom great malice and great might belong.

CXII.

“ Likewise to them are Poets much beholden
For secret favours in the midnight glooms ;
Brave Spenser quaff’d out of their goblets golden,
And saw their tables spread of prompt mushroom-
rooms,
And heard their horns of honeysuckle blooms
Sounding upon the air most soothing soft,
Like humming bees busy about the brooms,—
And glanced this fair queen’s witchery full oft,
And in her magic wain soar’d far aloft.

CXIII.

“ Nay I myself, though mortal, once was nursed
By fairy gossips, friendly at my birth,
And in my childish ear glib Mab rehearsed
Her breezy travels round our planet’s girth,
Telling me wonders of the moon and earth ;

My gramarye at her grave lap I conn'd,
Where Puck hath been convened to make me
 mirth;
I have had from Queen 'Titania tokens fond,
And toy'd with Oberon's permitted wand.

CXIV.

"With figs and plums and Persian dates they fed
 me,
And delicate cates after my sunset meal,
And took me by my childish hand, and led me
By craggy rocks crested with keeps of steel,
Whose awful bases deep dark woods conceal,
Staining some dead lake with their verdant
 dyes:
And when the West sparkled at Phœbus' wheel,
With fairy euphrasy they purged mine eyes,
To let me see their cities in the skies.

CXV.

"'Twas they first school'd my young imagination
To take its flights like any new-fledged bird,
And show'd the span of winged meditation
Stretch'd wider than things grossly seen or heard.
With sweet swift Ariel how I soar'd and stirr'd
The fragrant blooms of spiritual bow'rs!
'Twas they endear'd what I have still preferr'd,
Nature's blest attributes and balmy pow'rs,
Her hills and vales and brooks, sweet birds and
 flow'rs!

CXVI.

“Wherefore with all true loyalty and duty
Will I regard them in my honouring rhyme,
With love for love, and homages to beauty,
And magic thoughts gather’d in night’s cool
clime,
With studious verse trancing the dragon Time,
Strong as old Merlin’s necromantic spells;
So these dear monarchs of the summer’s prime
Shall live unstartled by his dreadful yells,
Till shrill larks warn them to their flowery cells.”

CXVII.

Look how a poison’d man turns livid black,
Drugg’d with a cup of deadly hellebore,
That sets his horrid features all at rack,—
So seem’d these words into the ear to pour
Of ghastly Saturn, answering with a roar
Of mortal pain and spite and utmost rage,
Wherewith his grisly arm he raised once more,
And bade the cluster’d sinews all engage,
As if at one fell stroke to wreck an age.

CXVIII.

Whereas the blade flash’d on the dinted ground,
Down through his steadfast foe, yet made no
scar

On that immortal Shade, or death-like wound;
But Time was long benumb’d, and stood ajar,

And then with baffled rage took flight afar,
To weep his hurt in some Cimmerian gloom,
Or meaner fames (like mine) to mock and
mar,
Or sharp his scythe for royal strokes of doom,
Whetting its edge on some old Cæsar's tomb.

CXIX.

Howbeit he vanish'd in the forest shade,
Distantly heard as if some grumbling pard,
And, like Narcissus, to a sound decay'd ;—
Meanwhile the fays cluster'd the gracious Bard,
The darling centre of their dear regard :
Besides of sundry dances on the green,
Never was mortal man so brightly starr'd,
Or won such pretty homages, I ween.
“Nod to him, Elves !” cries the melodious queen.

CXX.

“Nod to him, Elves, and flutter round about
him,
And quite inclose him with your pretty crowd,
And touch him lovingly, for that, without him,
The silk-worm now had spun our dreary
shroud ;—
But he hath all dispersed death's tearful cloud,
And Time's dread effigy scared quite away :
Bow to him then, as though to me ye bow'd,
And his dear wishes prosper and obey
Wherever love and wit can find a way !

CXXI.

“’Noint him with fairy dews of magic savours,
Shaken from orient buds still pearly wet,
Roses and spicy pinks,—and, of all favours,
Plant in his walks the purple violet,
And meadow-sweet under the hedges set,
To mingle breaths with dainty eglantine
And honeysuckles sweet,—nor yet forget
Some pastoral flowery chaplets to entwine,
To vie the thoughts about his brow benign!

CXXII.

“Let no wild things astonish him or fear him,
But tell them all how mild he is of heart,
Till e’en the timid hares go frankly near him,
And eke the dappled does, yet never start;
Nor shall their fawns into the thickets dart,
Nor wrens forsake their nests among the leaves,
Nor speckled thrushes flutter far apart;—
But bid the sacred swallow haunt his eaves,
To guard his roof from lightning and from thieves.

CXXIII.

“Or when he goes the nimble squirrel’s visitor,
Let the brown hermit bring his hoarded nuts,
For, tell him, this is Nature’s kind Inquisitor,—
Though man keeps cautious doors that conscience
 shuts,
For conscious wrong all curious quest rebuts,—

Nor yet shall bees uncase their jealous stings,
However he may watch their straw-built huts ;—
So let him learn the crafts of all small things,
Which he will hint most aptly when he sings.”

CXXIV.

Here she leaves off, and with a graceful hand
Waves thrice three splendid circles round his head ;
Which, though deserted by the radiant wand,
Wears still the glory which her waving shed,
Such as erst crown'd the old Apostle's head,
To show the thoughts there harbour'd were divine
And on immortal contemplations fed :—
Goodly it was to see that glory shine
Around a brow so lofty and benign !—

CXXV.

Goodly it was to see the elfin brood
Contend for kisses of his gentle hand,
That had their mortal enemy withstood,
And stay'd their lives, fast ebbing with the sand.
Long while this strife engaged the pretty band ;
But now bold Chanticleer, from farm to farm,
Challeng'd the dawn creeping o'er eastern land,
And well the fairies knew that shrill alarm,
Which sounds the knell of every elfish charm.

CXXVI.

And soon the rolling mist, that 'gan arise
From plashy mead and undiscover'd stream

Earth's morning incense to the early skies,
Crept o'er the failing landscape of my dream.
Soon faded then the Phantom of my theme—
A shapeless shade, that fancy disavow'd,
And shrank to nothing in the mist extreme.
Then flew Titania,—and her little crowd,
Like flocking linnets, vanish'd in a cloud.

HERO AND LEANDER.

1827.

TO

S. T. COLERIDGE.

It is not with a hope my feeble praise
Can add one moment's honour to thy own,
That with thy mighty name I grace these lays :
I seek to glorify myself alone:
For that some precious favour thou hast shown
To my endeavour in a bygone time,
And by this token, I would have it known
Thou art my friend, and friendly to my rhyme !
It is my dear ambition now to climb
Still higher in thy thought,—if my bold pen
May thrust on contemplations more sublime.—
But I am thirsty for thy praise, for when
We gain applauses from the great in name,
We seem to be partakers of *their* fame.

HERO AND LEANDER.

I.

OH Bards of old ! what sorrows have ye sung,
And tragic stories, chronicled in stone,—
Sad Philomel restored her ravish'd tongue,
And transform'd Niobe in dumbness shown ;
Sweet Sappho on her love for ever calls,
And Hero on the drown'd Leander falls !

II.

Was it that spectacles of sadder plights
Should make our blisses relish the more high ?
Then all fair dames, and maidens, and true
knights,
Whose flourish'd fortunes prosper in Love's eye,
Weep here, unto a tale of ancient grief,
Traced from the course of an old bas-relief.

III.

There stands Abydos !—here is Sestos' steep,
Hard by the gusty margin of the sea,
Where sprinkling waves continually do leap ;
And that is where those famous lovers be,

A builded gloom shot up into the gray,
As if the first tall watch-tow'r of the day.

IV.

Lo! how the lark soars upward and is gone ;
Turning a spirit as he nears the sky,
His voice is heard, though body there is none,
And rain-like music scatters from on high ;
But Love would follow with a falcon spite,
To pluck the minstrel from his dewy height.

V.

For Love hath framed a ditty of regrets,
Tuned to the hollow sobbings on the shore,
A vexing sense, that with like music frets,
And chimes this dismal burthen o'er and o'er,
Saying, Leander's joys are past and spent,
Like stars extinguish'd in the firmament.

VI.

For ere the golden crevices of morn
Let in those regal luxuries of light,
Which all the variable east adorn,
And hang rich fringes on the skirts of night,
Leander, weaning from sweet Hero's side,
Must leave a widow where he found a bride.

VII.

Hark! how the billows beat upon the sand!
Like pawing steeds impatient of delay ;

Meanwhile their rider, ling'ring on the land,
Dallies with love, and holds farewell at bay
A too short span.—How tedious slow is grief!
But parting renders time both sad and brief.

VIII.

“Alas (he sigh'd), that this first glimpsing light,
Which makes the wide world tenderly appear,
Should be the burning signal for my flight,
From all the world's best image, which is here ;
Whose very shadow, in my fond compare,
Shines far more bright than Beauty's self elsewhere.

IX.

Their cheeks are white as blossoms of the dark,
Whose leaves close up and show the outward
pale,
And those fair mirrors where their joys did
spark,
All dim and tarnish'd with a dreary veil,
No more to kindle till the night's return,
Like stars replenish'd at Joy's golden urn.

X.

Ev'n thus they creep into the spectral gray,
That cramps the landscape in its narrow brim,
As when two shadows by old Lethe stray,
He clasping her, and she entwining him ;
Like trees wind-parted that embrace anon,
'True love so often goes before 'tis gone.

XI.

For what rich merchant but will pause in fear,
To trust his wealth to the unsafe abyss?
So Hero dotes upon her treasure here,
And sums the loss with many an anxious kiss,
Whilst her fond eyes grow dizzy in her head,
Fear aggravating fear with shows of dread.

XII.

She thinks how many have been sunk and
drown'd,
And spies their snow-white bones below the
deep,
Then calls huge congregated monsters round,
And plants a rock wherever he would leap;
Anon she dwells on a fantastic dream,
Which she interprets of that fatal stream.

XIII.

Saying, "That honey'd fly I saw was thee,
Which lighted on a water-lily's cup,
When, lo! the flow'r, enamour'd of my bee,
Closed on him suddenly and lock'd him up,
And he was smother'd in her drenching dew;
Therefore this day thy drowning I shall rue."

XIV.

But next, remembering her virgin fame,
She clips him in her arms and bids him go,

But seeing him break loose, repents her shame,
And plucks him back upon her bosom's snow ;
And tears unfix her iced resolve again,
As steadfast frosts are thaw'd by show'rs of rain.

XV.

O for a type of parting !—Love to love
Is like the fond attraction of two spheres,
Which needs a godlike effort to remove,
And then sink down their sunny atmospheres,
In rain and darkness on each ruin'd heart,
Nor yet their melodies will sound apart.

XVI.

So brave Leander sunders from his bride ;
The wrenching pang disparts his soul in twain ;
Half stays with her, half goes towards the
 tide,—
And life must ache, until they join again.
Now wouldst thou know the wideness of the
 wound,
Mete every step he takes upon the ground.

XVII.

And for the agony and bosom-throe,
Let it be measured by the wide vast air,
For that is infinite, and so is woe,
Since parted lovers breathe it everywhere.
Look how it heaves Leander's labouring chest,
Panting, at poise, upon a rocky crest !

XVIII.

From which he leaps into the scooping brine,
That shocks his bosom with a double chill ;
Because, all hours, till the slow sun's decline,
That cold divorcer will betwixt them still ;
Wherefore he likens it to Styx' foul tide,
Where life grows death upon the other side.

XIX.

Then sadly he confronts his twofold toil
Against rude waves and an unwilling mind,
Wishing, alas ! with the stout rower's toil,
That like a rower he might gaze behind,
And watch that lonely statue he hath left
On her bleak summit, weeping and bereft !

XX.

Yet turning oft, he sees her troubled locks
Pursue him still the furthest that they may ;
Her marble arms that overstretch the rocks,
And her pale passion'd hands that seem to pray
In dumb petition to the gods above :
Love prays devoutly when it prays for love !

XXI.

Then with deep sighs he blows away the wave,
That hangs superfluous tears upon his cheek,
And bans his labour like a hopeless slave,
That, chain'd in hostile galley, faint and weak,

Plies on despairing through the restless foam,
Thoughtful of his lost love, and far-off home.

XXII.

The drowsy mist before him chill and dank,
Like a dull lethargy o'erleans the sea,
When he rows on against the utter blank,
Steering as if to dim eternity,—
Like Love's frail ghost departing with the dawn ;
A failing shadow in the twilight drawn.

XXIII.

And soon is gone,—or nothing but a faint
And failing image in the eye of thought,
That mocks his model with an after-paint,
And stains an atom like the shape she sought ;
Then with her earnest vows she hopes to fee
The old and hoary majesty of sea.

XXIV.

“O King of waves, and brother of high Jove,
Preserve my sumless venture there afloat ;
A woman's heart, and its whole wealth of love,
Are all embark'd upon that little boat ;
Nay, but two loves, two lives, a double fate,
A perilous voyage for so dear a freight.

XXV.

“If impious mariners be stain'd with crime,
Shake not in awful rage thy hoary locks ;

Lay by thy storms until another time,
Lest my frail bark be dash'd against the rocks :
O rather smooth thy deeps, that he may fly
Like Love himself, upon a seeming sky !

XXVI.

“ Let all thy herded monsters sleep beneath,
Nor gore him with crook'd tusks, or wreathed
horns ;
Let no fierce sharks destroy him with their teeth,
Nor spine-fish wound him with their venom'd
thorns ;
But if he faint, and timely succour lack,
Let ruthful dolphins rest him on their back.

XXVII.

“ Let no false dimpling whirlpools suck him in,
Nor slimy quicksands smother his sweet breath ;
Let no jagg'd corals tear his tender skin,
Nor mountain billows bury him in death ;”—
And with that thought forestalling her own fears,
She drown'd his painted image in her tears.

XXVIII.

By this, the climbing sun, with rest repair'd,
Look'd through the gold embrasures of the sky,
And ask'd the drowsy world how she had fared ;—
The drowsy world shone brighten'd in reply ;
And smiling off her fogs, his slanting beam
Spied young Leander in the middle stream.

XXIX.

His face was pallid, but the hectic morn
Had hung a lying crimson on his cheeks,
And slanderous sparkles in his eyes forlorn ;
So death lies ambush'd in consumptive streaks ;
But inward grief was writhing o'er its task,
As heart-sick jesters weep behind the mask.

XXX.

He thought of Hero and the lost delight,
Her last embracings, and the space between ;
He thought of Hero and the future night,
Her speechless rapture and enamour'd mien,
When, lo ! before him, scarce two galleys' space,
His thought's confronted with another face !

XXXI.

Her aspect's like a moon divinely fair,
But makes the midnight darker that it lies on :
'Tis so beclouded with her coal-black hair
That densely skirts her luminous horizon,
Making her doubly fair, thus darkly set,
As marble lies advantaged upon jet.

XXXII.

She's all too bright, too argent, and too pale,
To be a woman ;—but a woman's double,
Reflected on the wave so faint and frail,
She tops the billows like an air-blown bubble ;

Or dim creation of a morning dream,
Fair as the wave-bleach'd lily of the stream.

XXXIII.

The very rumour strikes his seeing dead :
Great beauty like great fear first stuns the sense :
He knows not if her lips be blue or red,
Nor of her eyes can give true evidence :
Like murder's witness swooning in the court,
His sight falls senseless by its own report.

XXXIV.

Anon resuming, it declares her eyes
Are tinct with azure, like two crystal wells
That drink the blue complexion of the skies,
Or pearls outpeeping from their silvery shells :
Her polish'd brow, it is an ample plain,
To lodge vast contemplations of the main.

XXXV.

Her lips might corals seem, but corals near,
Stray through her hair like blossoms on a bower ;
And o'er the weaker red still domineer,
And make it pale by tribute to more power ;
Her rounded cheeks are of still paler hue,
Touch'd by the bloom of water, tender blue.

XXXVI.

Thus he beholds her rocking on the water,
Under the glossy umbrage of her hair,

Like pearly Amphitrite's fairest daughter,
Naiad, or Nereid, or Syren fair,
Mislodging music in her pitiless breast,
A nightingale within a falcon's nest.

XXXVII.

They say there be such maidens in the deep,
Charming poor mariners, that all too near
By mortal lullabies fall dead asleep,
As drowsy men are poison'd through the ear ;
Therefore Leander's fears begin to urge,
This snowy swan is come to sing his dirge.

XXXVIII.

At which he falls into a deadly chill,
And strains his eyes upon her lips apart ;
Fearing each breath to feel that prelude shrill,
Pierce through his marrow, like a breath-blown
 dart
Shot sudden from an Indian's hollow cane,
With mortal venom fraught, and fiery pain.

XXXIX.

Here then, poor wretch, how he begins to crowd
A thousand thoughts within a pulse's space ;
There seem'd so brief a pause of life allow'd,
His mind stretch'd universal, to embrace
The whole wide world, in an extreme fare-
 well,—
A moment's musing—but an age to tell.

XL.

For there stood Hero, widow'd at a glance,
The foreseen sum of many a tedious fact,
Pale cheeks, dim eyes, and wither'd countenance,
A wasted ruin that no wasting lack'd ;
Time's tragic consequents ere time began,
A world of sorrow in a tear-drop's span.

XLI.

A moment's thinking is an hour in words,—
An hour of words is little for some woes ;
Too little breathing a long life affords,
For love to paint itself by perfect shows ;
Then let his love and grief unwrong'd lie dumb,
Whilst Fear, and that it fears, together come.

XLII.

As when the crew, hard by some jutting cape,
Struck pale and panic'd by the billows' roar,
Lay by all timely measures of escape,
And let their bark go driving on the shore ;
So fray'd Leander, drifting to his wreck,
Gazing on Scylla, falls upon her neck,

XLIII.

For he hath all forgot the swimmer's art,
The rower's cunning, and the pilot's skill,
Letting his arms fall down in languid part,
Sway'd by the waves, and nothing by his will,

Till soon he jars against that glossy skin,
Solid like glass, though seemingly as thin.

XLIV.

Lo! how she startles at the warning shock
And straightway girds him to her radiant breast,
More like his safe smooth harbour than his rock ;
Poor wretch, he is so faint and toil-opprest,
He cannot loose him from his grappling foe,
Whether for love or hate, she lets not go.

XLV.

His eyes are blinded with the sleety brine,
His ears are deafen'd with the wildering noise ;
He asks the purpose of her fell design,
But foamy waves choke up his struggling voice ;
Under the ponderous sea his body dips,
And Hero's name dies bubbling on his lips.

XLVI.

Look how a man is lower'd to his grave ;
A yearning hollow in the green earth's lap ;
So he is sunk into the yawning wave,
The plunging sea fills up the watery gap ;
Anon he is all gone, and nothing seen,
But likeness of green turf and hillocks green.

XLVII.

And where he swam, the constant sun lies sleeping,
Over the verdant plain that makes his bed ;

And all the noisy waves go freshly leaping,
Like gamesome boys over the churchyard dead ;
The light in vain keeps looking for his face,
Now screaming sea-fowl settle in his place.

XLVIII.

Yet weep and watch for him, though all in
vain !

Ye moaning billows, seek him as ye wander !
Ye gazing sunbeams, look for him again !
Ye winds, grow hoarse with asking for Lean-
der !

Ye did but spare him for more cruel rape,
Sea-storm and ruin in a female shape !

XLIX.

She says 'tis love hath bribed her to this deed,
The glancing of his eyes did so bewitch her.
O bootless theft ! unprofitable meed !
Love's treasury is sack'd, but she no richer ;
The sparkles of his eyes are cold and dead,
And all his golden looks are turn'd to lead !

L.

She holds the casket, but her simple hand
Hath spill'd its dearest jewel by the way ;
She hath life's empty garment at command,
But her own death lies covert in the prey ;
As if a thief should steal a tainted vest,
Some dead man's spoil, and sicken of his pest.

LI.

Now she compels him to her deeps below,
Hiding his face beneath her plenteous hair,
Which jealously she shakes all round her brow,
For dread of envy, though no eyes are there
But seals', and all brute tenants of the deep,
Which heedless through the wave their journeys
keep.

LII.

Down and still downward through the dusky green
She bore him, murmuring with joyous haste
In too rash ignorance, as he had been
Born to the texture of that watery waste ;
That which she breathed and sigh'd, the emerald
wave,
How could her pleasant home become his grave

LIII.

Down and still downward through the dusky
green
She bore her treasure, with a face too nigh
To mark how life was alter'd in its mien,
Or how the light grew torpid in his eye,
Or how his pearly breath, unprison'd there,
Flew up to join the universal air.

LIV.

She could not miss the throbbings of his heart,
Whilst her own pulse so wanton'd in its joy ;

She could not guess he struggled to depart,
And when he strove no more the hapless
boy!

She read his mortal stillness for content,
Feeling no fear where only love was meant.

LV.

Soon she alights upon her ocean-floor,
And straight unyokes her arms from her fair
prize;

Then on his lovely face begins to pore,
As if to glut her soul;—her hungry eyes
Have grown so jealous of her arms' delight;
It seems, she hath no other sense but sight.

LVI.

But O sad marvel! O most bitter strange!
What dismal magic makes his cheek so pale?
Why will he not embrace,—why not exchange
Her kindly kisses;—wherefore not exhale
Some odorous message from life's ruby gates,
Where she his first sweet embassy awaits?

LVII.

Her eyes, poor watchers, fix'd upon his looks,
Are grappled with a wonder near to grief,
As one, who pores on undecipher'd books,
Strains vain surmise, and dodges with belief;
So she keeps gazing with a mazy thought,
Framing a thousand doubts that end in nought.

LVIII.

Too stern inscription for a page so young,
The dark translation of his look was death !
But death was written in an alien tongue,
And learning was not by to give it breath ;
So one deep woe sleeps buried in its seal,
Which Time, untimely, hasteth to reveal.

LIX.

Meanwhile she sits unconscious of her hap,
Nursing Death's marble effigy, which there
With heavy head lies pillow'd in her lap,
And elbows all unhinged ;—his sleeking hair
Creeps o'er her knees, and settles where his hand
Leans with lax fingers crook'd against the sand ;

LX.

And there lies spread in many an oozy trail,
Like glossy weeds hung from a chalky base,
That shows no whiter than his brow is pale ;
So soon the wintry death had bleach'd his face
Into cold marble,—with blue chilly shades,
Showing wherein the freezy blood pervades.

LXI.

And o'er his steadfast check a furrow'd pain
Hath set, and stiffen'd like a storm in ice,
Showing by drooping lines the deadly strain
Of mortal anguish ;—yet you might gaze twice

Ere Death it seem'd, and not his cousin, Sleep,
That through those creviced lids did underpeep.

LXII.

But all that tender bloom about his eyes,
Is Death's own violets, which his utmost rite
It is to scatter when the red rose dies ;
For blue is chilly, and akin to white :
Also he leaves some tinges on his lips,
Which he hath kiss'd with such cold frosty nips.

LXIII.

"Surely," quoth she, "he sleeps, the senseless
thing,
Oppress'd and faint with toiling in the stream !"
Therefore she will not mar his rest, but sing
So low, her tune shall mingle with his dream ;
Meanwhile, her lily fingers tasks to twine
His uncrispt locks uncurling in the brine.

LXIV.

"O lovely boy !"—thus she attuned her voice,—
"Welcome, thrice welcome, to a sea-maid's
home,
My love-mate thou shalt be, and true heart's
choice ;
How have I long'd such a twin-self should
come,—
A lonely thing, till this sweet chance befell,
My heart kept sighing like a hollow shell.

LXV.

“ Here thou shalt live, beneath this secret dome,
An ocean-bow’r ; defended by the shade
Of quiet waters, a cool emerald gloom
To lap thee all about. Nay, be not fray’d,
Those are but shady fishes that sail by
Like antic clouds across my liquid sky !

LXVI.

“ Look how the sunbeam burns upon their scales,
And shows rich glimpses of their Tyrian skins ;
They flash small lightnings from their vigorous
tails,
And winking stars are kindled at their fins ;
These shall divert thee in thy weariest mood,
And seek thy hand for gamesomeness and food.

LXVII.

“ Lo ! those green pretty leaves with tassel bells,
My flow’rets those, that never pine for drowth ;
Myself did plant them in the dappled shells,
That drink the wave with such a rosy mouth,—
Pearls wouldst thou have beside ? crystals to
shine ?
I had such treasures once,—now they are thine.

LXVIII.

“ Now, lay thine ear against this golden sand,
And thou shalt hear the music of the sea,

Those hollow tunes it plays against the land,—
Is't not a rich and wondrous melody?
I have lain hours, and fancied in its tone
I heard the languages of ages gone!

LXIX.

“I too can sing when it shall please thy choice,
And breathe soft tunes through a melodious
 shell,
Though heretofore I have but set my voice
To some long sighs, grief harmonized, to tell
How desolate I fared;—but this sweet change
Will add new notes of gladness to my range!

LXX.

“Or bid me speak, and I will tell thee tales,
Which I have framed out of the noise of waves;
Ere now, I have communed with senseless gales,
And held vain colloquies with barren caves;
But I could talk to thee whole days and days,
Only to word my love a thousand ways.

LXXI.

“But if thy lips will bless me with their speech,
Then ope, sweet oracles! and I'll be mute;
I was born ignorant for thee to teach,
Nay all love's lore to thy dear looks impute;
Then ope thine eyes, fair teachers, by whose
 light
I saw to give away my heart aright!”

LXXII.

But cold and deaf the sullen creature lies,
Over her knees, and with concealing clay,
Like hoarding Avarice locks up his eyes,
And leaves her world impoverish'd of day ;
Then at his cruel lips she bends to plead,
But there the door is closed against her need.

LXXIII.

Surely he sleeps,—so her false wits infer !
Alas ! poor sluggard, ne'er to wake again !
Surely he sleeps, yet without any stir
That might denote a vision in his brain ;
Or if he does not sleep, he feigns too long,
Twice she hath reach'd the ending of her song.

LXXIV.

Therefore 'tis time she tells him to uncover
Those radiant jesters, and disperse her fears,
Whereby her April face is shaded over,
Like rainy clouds just ripe for showering tears ;
Nay, if he will not wake, so poor she gets,
Herself must rob those lock'd up cabinets.

LXXV.

With that she stoops above his brow, and bids
Her busy hands forsake his tangled hair,
And tenderly lift up those coffer-lids,
That she may gaze upon the jewels there,

Like babes that pluck an early bud apart,
To know the dainty colour of its heart.

LXXVI.

Now, picture one, soft creeping to a bed,
Who slowly parts the fringe-hung canopies,
And then starts back to find the sleeper dead ;
So she looks in on his uncover'd eyes,
And seeing all within so drear and dark,
Her own bright soul dies in her like a spark.

LXXVII.

Backward she falls, like a pale prophetess,
Under the swoon of holy divination :
And what had all surpass'd her simple guess,
She now resolves in this dark revelation ;
Death's very mystery,—oblivious death ;—
Long sleep,—deep night, and an entrancèd breath.

LXXVIII.

Yet life, though wounded sore, not wholly slain,
Merely obscured, and not extinguish'd, lies ;
Her breath that stood at ebb, soon flows again,
Heaving her hollow breast with heavy sighs,
And light comes in and kindles up the gloom,
To light her spirit from its transient tomb.

LXXIX.

Then like the sun, awaken'd at new dawn,
With pale bewilder'd face she peers about,

And spies blurr'd images obscurely drawn,
Uncertain shadows in a haze of doubt ;
But her true grief grows shapely by degrees,
A perish'd creature lying on her knees.

LXXX.

And now she knows how that old Murther
preys,
Whose quarry on her lap lies newly slain :
How he roams all abroad and grimly slays,
Like a lean tiger in Love's own domain ;
Parting fond mates,—and oft in flowery lawns
Bereaves mild mothers of their milky fawns.

LXXXI.

O too dear knowledge ! O pernicious earning !
Foul curse engraven upon beauty's page !
Ev'n now the sorrow of that deadly learning
Ploughs up her brow, like an untimely age,
And on her cheek stamps verdict of death's
truth
By canker blights upon the bud of youth !

LXXXII.

For as unwholesome winds decay the leaf,
So her cheeks' rose is perish'd by her sighs,
And withers in the sickly breath of grief ;
Whilst unacquainted rheum bedims her eyes,
Tears, virgin tears, the first that ever leapt
From those young lids, now plentifully wept.

LXXXIII.

Whence being shed, the liquid crystalline
Drops straightway down, refusing to partake
In gross admixture with the baser brine,
But shinks and hardens into pearls opaque,
Hereafter to be worn on arms and ears ;
So one maid's trophy is another's tears !

LXXXIV.

“ O foul Arch-Shadow, thou old cloud of Night,
(Thus in her frenzy she began to wail,)
Thou blank oblivion—blotter out of light,
Life's ruthless murderer, and dear love's bale !
Why hast thou left thy havoc incomplete,
Leaving me here, and slaying the more sweet ?

LXXXV.

“ Lo ! what a lovely ruin thou hast made !
Alas ! alas ! thou hast no eyes to see,
And blindly slew'st him in misguided shade.
Would I had lent my doting sense to thee !
But now I turn to thee, a willing mark,
Thine arrows miss me in the aimless dark !

LXXXVI.

“ O doubly cruel !—twice misdoing spite,
But I will guide, thee with my helping eyes,
Or walk the wide world through, devoid of sight,
Yet thou shalt know me by my many sighs.

Nay, then thou should'st have spared my rose,
false Death,
And known Love's flow'r by smelling his sweet
breath ;

LXXXVII.

“ Or, when thy furious rage was round him
dealing,
Love should have grown from touching of his
skin ;
But like cold marble thou art all unfeeling,
And hast no ruddy springs of warmth within,
And being but a shape of freezing bone,
Thy touching only turn'd my love to stone !

LXXXVIII.

“ And here, alas ! he lies across my knees,
With cheeks still colder than the stilly wave,
The light beneath his eyelids seems to freeze ;
Here then, since Love is dead and lacks a
grave,
O come and dig it in my sad heart's core—
That wound will bring a balsam for its sore !

LXXXIX.

“ For art thou not a sleep where sense of ill
Lies stingless, like a sense benumb'd with cold,
Healing all hurts only with sleep's good-will ?
So shall I slumber, and perchance behold
My living love in dreams,—O happy night,
That lets me company his banish'd spright !

XC.

“ O poppy Death !—sweet poisoner of sleep ;
Where shall I seek for thee, oblivious drug,
That I may steep thee in my drink, and creep
Out of life’s coil ? Look, Idol ! how I hug
Thy dainty image in this strict embrace,
And kiss this clay-cold model of thy face !

XCI.

“ Put out, put out these sun-consuming lamps,
I do but read my sorrows by their shine ;
O come and quench them with thy oozy damps,
And let my darkness intermix with thine ;
Since love is blinded, wherefore should I see ?
Now love is death,—death will be love to me !

XCII.

“ Away, away, this vain complaining breath,
It does but stir the troubles that I weep ;
Let it be hush’d and quieted, sweet Death ;
The wind must settle ere the wave can sleep,—
Since love is silent I would fain be mute ;
O Death, be gracious to my dying suit !”

XCIII.

Thus far she pleads, but pleading nought avails
her,
For Death, her sullen burthen, deigns no
heed ;

'Then with dumb craving arms, since darkness
 fails her,
She prays to heaven's fair light, as if her need
Inspired her there were Gods to pity pain,
Or end it,—but she lifts her arms in vain !

XCIV.

Poor gilded Grief ! the subtle light by this
With mazy gold creeps through her watery mine,
And, diving downward through the green abyss,
Lights up her palace with an amber shine ;
There, falling on her arms,—the crystal skin
Reveals the ruby tide that fares within.

XCV.

Look how the fulsome beam would hang a glory
On her dark hair, but the dark hairs repel it ;
Look how the perjured glow suborns a story
On her pale lips, but lips refuse to tell it ;
Grief will not swerve from grief, however told
On coral lips, or character'd in gold ;

XCVI.

Or else, thou maid ! safe anchor'd on Love's
 neck,
Listing the hapless doom of young Leander,
Thou would'st not shed a tear for that old wreck,
Sitting secure where no wild surges wander ;
Whereas the woe moves on with tragic pace,
And shows its sad reflection in thy face.

XCVII.

Thus having travell'd on, and track'd the tale,
Like the due course of an old bas-relief,
Where Tragedy pursues her progress pale,
Brood here awhile upon that sea-maid's grief,
And take a deeper imprint from the frieze
Of that young Fate, with Death upon her knees.

XCVIII.

Then whilst the melancholy muse withal
Resumes her music in a sadder tone,
Meanwhile the sunbeam strikes upon the wall,
Conceive that lovely siren to live on,
Ev'n as Hope whisper'd, the Promethean light
Would kindle up the dead Leander's spright.

XCIX.

"'Tis light," she says, "that feeds the glittering
stars,
And those were stars set in his heavenly brow ;
But this salt cloud, this cold sea-vapour, mars
Their radiant breathing, and obscures them
now ;
Therefore I'll lay him in the clear blue air,
And see how these dull orbs will kindle there."

C.

Swiftly as dolphins glide, or swifter yet,
With dead Leander in her fond arms' fold,

She cleaves the meshes of that radiant net,
The sun hath twined above of liquid gold,
Nor slacks till on the margin of the land
She lays his body on the glowing sand.

CI.

There, like a pearly waif, just past the reach
Of foamy billows he lies cast. Just then,
Some listless fishers, straying down the beach,
Spy out this wonder. Thence the curious
men,
Low crouching, creep into a thicket brake,
And watch her doings till their rude hearts ache.

CII.

First she begins to chafe him till she faints,
Then falls upon his mouth with kisses many,
And sometimes pauses in her own complaints
To list his breathing, but there is not any,—
Then looks into his eyes where no light dwells ;
Light makes no pictures in such muddy wells.

CIII.

The hot sun parches his discover'd eyes,
The hot sun beats on his discolour'd limbs,
The sand is oozy whereupon he lies,
Soiling his fairness ;—then away she swims,
Meaning to gather him a daintier bed,
Plucking the cool fresh weeds, brown, green, and
red.

CIV.

But, simple-witted thief, while she dives under,
Another robs her of her amorous theft ;
The ambush'd fishermen creep forth to plunder,
And steal the unwatch'd treasure she has left ;
Only his void impression dints the sands ;
Leander is purloin'd by stealthy hands !

CV.

Lo ! how she shudders off the beaded wave !
Like Grief all over tears, and senseless falls,
His void imprint seems hollow'd for her grave ;
Then, rising on her knees, looks round and calls
On Hero ! Hero ! having learn'd this name
Of his last breath, she calls him by the same.

CVI.

Then with her frantic hands she rends her hairs,
And casts them forth, sad keepsakes to the wind,
As if in plucking those she pluck'd her cares ;
But grief lies deeper, and remains behind
Like a barb'd arrow, rankling in her brain,
Turning her very thoughts to throbs of pain.

CVII.

Anon her tangled locks are left alone,
And down upon the sand she meekly sits,
Hard by the foam, as humble as a stone,
Like an enchanted maid beside her wits

That ponders with a look serene and tragic,
Stunn'd by the mighty mystery of magic.

CVIII.

Or think of Ariadne's utter trance,
Crazed by the flight of that disloyal traitor,
Who left her gazing on the green expanse
That swallow'd up his track,—yet this would mate
Ev'n in the cloudy summit of her woe, [her,
When o'er the far sea-brim she saw him go.

CIX.

For even so she bows, and bends her gaze
O'er the eternal waste, as if to sum
Its waves by weary thousands all her days,
Dismally doom'd! meanwhile the billows come,
And coldly dabble with her quiet feet,
Like any bleaching stones they wont to greet.

CX.

And thence into her lap have boldly sprung,
Washing her weedy tresses to and fro,
That round her crouching knees have darkly hung
But she sits careless of waves' ebb and flow,
Like a lone beacon on a desert coast,
Showing where all her hope was wreck'd and lost.

CXI.

Yet whether in the sea or vaulted sky,
She knoweth not her love's abrupt resort,

So like a shape of dreams he left her eye,
Winking with doubt. Meanwhile, the churls' re-
port
Has throng'd the beach with many a curious
face,
That peeps upon her from its hiding place.

CXII.

And here a head, and there a brow half seen,
Dodges behind a rock. Here on his hands,
A mariner his crumpled cheeks doth lean
Over a rugged crest. Another stands,
Holding his harmful arrow at the head,
Still check'd by human caution and strange dread.

CXIII.

One stops his ears,—another close beholder
Whispers unto the next his grave surmise;
This crouches down,—and just above his shoulder,
A woman's pity saddens in her eyes,
And prompts her to befriend that lonely grief,
With all sweet helps of sisterly relief.

CXIV.

And down the sunny beach she paces slowly,
With many doubtful pauses by the way;
Grief hath an influence so hush'd and holy,—
Making her twice attempt, ere she can lay
Her hand upon that sea-maid's shoulder white,
Which makes her startle up in wild affright.

CXV.

And, like a seal, she leaps into the wave
That drowns the shrill remainder of her scream ;
Anon the sea fills up the watery cave,
And seals her exit with a foamy seam,—
Leaving those baffled gazers on the beach,
Turning in uncouth wonder each to each.

CXVI.

Some watch, some call, some see her head emerge,
Wherever a brown weed falls through the foam ;
Some point to white eruptions of the surge :
But she is vanish'd to her shady home,
Under the deep, inscrutable,—and there
Weeps in a midnight made of her own hair.

CXVII.

Now here, the sighing winds, before unheard,
Forth from their cloudy caves begin to blow,
Till all the surface of the deep is stirr'd,
Like to the panting grief it hides below ;
And heaven is cover'd with a stormy rack,
Soiling the waters with its inky black.

CXVIII.

The screaming fowl resigns her finny prey,
And labours shoreward with a bending wing,
Rowing against the wind her toilsome way ;
Meanwhile, the curling billows chafe, and fling

Their dewy frost still further on the stones,
That answer to the wind with hollow groans.

CXIX.

And here and there a fisher's far-off bark
Flies with the sun's last glimpse upon its sail,
Like a bright flame amid the waters dark,
Watch'd with the hope and fear of maidens pale ;
And anxious mothers that upturn their brows,
Freighting the gusty wind with frequent vows.

CXX.

For that the horrid deep has no sure path
To guide love safe into his homely haven.
And lo ! the storm grows blacker in its wrath,
O'er the dark billow brooding like a raven,
That bodes of death and widow's sorrowing,
Under the dusty covert of his wing.

CXXI.

And so day ended. But no vesper spark
Hung forth its heavenly sign ; but sheets of flame
Play'd round the savage features of the dark,
Making night horrible. That night, there came
A weeping maiden to high Sestos' steep,
And tore her hair and gazed upon the deep.

CXXII.

And waved aloft her bright and ruddy torch,
Whose flame the boastful wind so rudely fann'd,

That oft it would recoil, and basely scorch
The tender covert of her sheltering hand ;
Which yet, for love's dear sake, disdain'd re-
tire,
And, like a glorying martyr, braved the fire.

CXXIII.

For that was love's own sign and beacon guide
Across the Hellespont's wide weary space,
Wherein he nightly struggled with the tide ;
Look what a red it forges on her face,
As if she blush'd at holding such a light,
Ev'n in the unseen presence of the night !

CXXIV.

Whereas her tragic cheek is truly pale,
And colder than the rude and ruffian air
That howls into her ear a horrid tale
Of storm, and wreck, and uttermost despair,
Saying, " Leander floats amid the surge,
And those are dismal waves that sing his dirge."

CXXV.

And hark !—a grieving voice, trembling and
faint,
Blends with the hollow sobbings of the sea ;
Like the sad music of a siren's plaint,
But shriller than Leander's voice should be,
Unless the wintry death had changed its tone,—
Wherefore she thinks she hears his spirit moan.

CXXVI.

For now, upon each brief and breathless pause,
Made by the raging winds, it plainly calls
On Hero ! Hero !—whereupon she draws
Close to the dizzy brink, that ne'er appalls
Her brave and constant spirit to recoil,
However the wild billows toss and toil.

CXXVII.

“ Oh ! dost thou live under the deep deep sea ?
I thought such love as thine could never die ;
If thou hast gain'd an immortality
From the kind pitying sea-god, so will I ;
And this false cruel tide that used to sever
Our hearts, shall be our common home for ever !

CXXVIII.

“ There we will sit and sport upon one billow,
And sing our ocean ditties all the day,
And lie together on the same green pillow,
That curls above us with its dewy spray ;
And ever in one presence live and dwell,
Like two twin pearls within the selfsame shell.”

CXXIX.

One moment then, upon the dizzy verge
She stands ;—with face upturn'd against the sky ;
A moment more, upon the foamy surge
She gazes, with a calm despairing eye ;

Feeling that awful pause of blood and breath
Which life endures when it confronts with death;—

CXXX.

Then from the giddy steep she madly springs,
Grasping her maiden robes, that vainly kept
Panting abroad, like unavailing wings,
To save her from her death.—The sea-maid wept,
And in a crystal cave her corse enshrined;
No meaner sepulchre should Hero find!



LYCUS, THE CENTAUR.

1827.

TO

J. H. REYNOLDS, ESQ.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

You will remember "Lycus."—It was written in the pleasant spring-time of our friendship, and I am glad to maintain that association, by connecting your name with the Poem. It will gratify me to find that you regard it with the old partiality for the writings of each other, which prevailed in those days. For my own sake, I must regret that your pen goes now into far other records than those which used to delight me.

Your true Friend and Brother,

T. HOOD.

LYCUS, THE CENTAUR.

FROM AN UNROLLED MANUSCRIPT OF APOLLONIUS
CURIUS.

THE ARGUMENT.

Lycus, detained by Circe in her magical dominion, is beloved by a Water Nymph, who, desiring to render him immortal, has recourse to the Sorceress. Circe gives her an incantation to pronounce, which should turn Lycus into a horse; but the horrible effect of the charm causing her to break off in the midst, he becomes a Centaur.

WHO hath ever been lured and bound by a
spell
To wander, foredoom'd, in that circle of hell
Where Witchery works with her will like a god,
Works more than the wonders of time at a nod,—
At a word,—at a touch,—at a flash of the eye,
But each form is a cheat, and each sound is a
lie,
Things born of a wish—to endure for a thought,
Or last for long ages—to vanish to nought,
Or put on new semblance? O Jove, I had given
The throne of a kingdom to know if that heaven,
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And the earth and its streams were of Circe, or
whether

They kept the world's birth-day and brighten'd
together !

For I loved them in terror, and constantly dreaded
That the earth where I trod, and the cave where
I bedded,

The face I might dote on, should live out the
lease :

Of the charm that created, and suddenly cease :
And I gave me to slumber, as if from one dream
To another—each horrid—and drank of the
stream

Like a first taste of blood, lest as water I quaff'd
Swift poison, and never should breathe from the
draught,—

Such drink as her own monarch husband drain'd
up

When he pledged her, and Fate closed his eyes
in the cup.

And I pluck'd of the fruit with held breath, and a
fear

That the branch would start back and scream out
in my ear ;

For once, at my suppering, I pluck'd in the dusk
An apple, juice-gushing and fragrant of musk ;
But by daylight my fingers were crimson'd with
gore,

And the half-eaten fragment was flesh at the
core ;

And once—only once—for the love of its blush,
I broke a bloom bough, but there came such a
gush

On my hand, that it fainted away in weak fright,
While the leaf-hidden woodpecker shriek'd at the
sight ;

And oh ! such an agony thrill'd in that note,
That my soul, startling up, beat its wings in my
throat,

As it long'd to be free of a body whose hand
Was doom'd to work torments a Fury had plann'd !

There I stood without stir, yet how willing to flee,
As if rooted and horror-turn'd into a tree,—

Oh ! for innocent death,—and to suddenly win it,
I drank of the stream, but no poison was in it ;

I plunged in its waters, but ere I could sink,
Some invisible fate pull'd me back to the brink ;

I sprang from the rock, from its pinnacle height,
But fell on the grass with a grasshopper's flight ;

I ran at my fears—they were fears and no more,
For the bear would not mangle my limbs, nor the

boar,

But moan'd,—all their brutalized flesh could not
smother

The horrible truth,—we were kin to each other !

They were mournfully gentle, and group'd for
relief,

All foes in their skin, but all friends in their grief :

The leopard was there,—baby-mild in its feature ;
And the tiger, black barr'd, with the gaze of a
creature

That knew gentle pity ; the bristle-back'd boar,
His innocent tusks stain'd with mulberry gore ;
And the laughing hyena—but laughing no more ;
And the snake, not with magical orbs to devise
Strange death, but with woman's attraction of
eyes ;

The tall ugly ape, that still bore a dim shine
Through his hairy eclipse of a manhood divine ;
And the elephant stately, with more than its
reason,

How thoughtful in sadness ! but this is no season
To reckon them up from the lag-bellied toad
To the mammoth, whose sobs shook his ponderous
load.

There were woes of all shapes, wretched forms,
when I came,
That hung down their heads with a human-like
shame ;

The elephant hid in the boughs, and the bear
Shed over his eyes the dark veil of his hair ;
And the womanly soul turning sick with dis-
gust,

Tried to vomit herself from her serpentine crust ;
While all groan'd their groans into one at their
lot,

As I brought them the image of what they were
not.

Then rose a wild sound of the human voice
choaking
Through vile brutal organs—low tremulous
croaking ;
Cries swallow'd abruptly—deep animal tones
Attuned to strange passion, and full-utter'd
groans ;
All shuddering weaker, till hush'd in a pause
Of tongues in mute motion and wide-yawning jaws ;
And I guess'd that those horrors were meant to
tell o'er
The tale of their woes ; but the silence told more
That writhed on their tongues ; and I knelt on
the sod,
And pray'd with my voice to the cloud-stirring
God,
For the sad congregation of supplicants there,
That upturn'd to his heaven brute faces of prayer ;
And I ceased, and they utter'd a moaning so deep,
That I wept for my heart-ease,—but they could
not weep,
And gazed with red eyeballs, all wistfully dry,
At the comfort of tears in a stag's human eye.
Then I motion'd them round, and, to soothe their
distress,
I caress'd, and they bent them to meet my caress,
Their necks to my arm, and their heads to my
palm,
And with poor grateful eyes suffer'd meekly and
calm

Those tokens of kindness, withheld by hard
fate
From returns that might chill the warm pity to
hate ;
So they passively bow'd—save the serpent, that
leapt
To my breast like a sister, and pressingly crept
In embrace of my neck, and with close kisses
blister'd
My lips in rash love,—then drew backward, and
glister'd
Her eyes in my face, and loud hissing affright,
Dropt down, and swift started away from my
sight !

This sorrow was theirs, but thrice wretched my
lot,
Turn'd brute in my soul, though my body was
not
When I fled from the sorrow of womanly faces,
That shrouded their woe in the shade of lone
places,
And dash'd off bright tears, till their fingers were
wet,
And then wiped their lids with long tresses of
jet:
But I fled—though they stretch'd out their hands,
all entangled
With hair, and blood-stain'd of the breasts they
had mangled,—

Though they call'd—and perchance but to ask,
 had I seen

Their loves, or to tell the vile wrongs that had
 been :

But I stay'd not to hear, lest the story should hold
Some hell-form of words, some enchantment once
 told,

Might translate me in flesh to a brute ; and I
 dreaded

To gaze on their charms, lest my faith should be
 wedded

With some pity,—and love in that pity per-
 chance—

To a thing not all lovely ; for once at a glance
Methought, where one sat, I descried a bright
 wonder

That flow'd like a long silver rivulet under
The long fenny grass, with so lovely a breast,
Could it be a snake-tail made the charm of the
 rest ?

So I roam'd in that circle of horrors, and Fear
Walk'd with me, by hills, and in valleys, and
 near

Cluster'd trees for their gloom—not to shelter
 from heat—

But lest a brute-shadow should grow at my feet ;
And besides that full oft in the sunshiny place,
Dark shadows would gather like clouds on its
 face,

In the horrible likeness of demons, (that none
Could see, like invisible flames in the sun;)
But grew to one monster that seized on the light,
Like the dragon that strangles the moon in the
 night;
Fierce sphinxes, long serpents, and asps of the
 South;
Wild birds of huge beak, and all horrors that
 drouth
Engenders of slime in the land of the pest,
Vile shapes without shape, and foul bats of the
 West,
Bringing Night on their wings; and the bodies
 wherein
Great Brahma imprisons the spirits of sin,
Many-handed, that blent in one phantom of fight
Like a Titan, and threatfully warr'd with the
 light;
I have heard the wild shriek that gave signal to
 close,
When they rush'd on that shadowy Python of
 foes,
That met with sharp beaks and wide gaping of
 jaws,
With flappings of wings, and fierce grasping of
 claws,
And whirls of long tails:—I have seen the quick
 flutter
Of fragments dissever'd,—and necks stretch'd to
 utter

Long screamings of pain,—the swift motion of
 blows,
And wrestling of arms—to the flight at the close,
When the dust of the earth startled upward in
 rings,
And flew on the whirlwind that follow'd their
 wings.

Thus they fled—not forgotten—but often to
 grow
Like fears in my eyes, when I walk'd to and fro
In the shadows, and felt from some beings unseen
The warm touch of kisses, but clean or unclean
I knew not, nor whether the love I had won
Was of heaven or hell—till one day in the sun,
In its very noon-blaze, I could fancy a thing
Of beauty, but faint as the cloud-mirrors fling
On the gaze of the shepherd that watches the
 sky,
Half-seen and half-dream'd in the soul of his eye.
And when in my musings I gazed on the stream,
In motionless trances of thought, there would seem
A face like that face, looking upward through
 mine ;
With its eyes full of love, and the dim-drowned
 shine
Of limbs and fair garments, like clouds in that
 blue
Serene:—there I stood for long hours but to
 view

Those fond earnest eyes that were ever uplifted
Towards me, and wink'd as the water-weed drifted
Between; but the fish knew that presence, and
plied
Their long curvy tails, and swift darted aside.

There I gazed for lost time, and forgot all the
things
That once had been wonders—the fishes with
wings,
And the glimmer of magnified eyes that look'd up
From the glooms of the bottom like pearls in a cup,
And the huge endless serpent of silvery gleam,
Slow winding along like a tide in the stream.
Some maid of the waters, some Naiad, methought
Held me dear in the pearl of her eye—and I
brought
My wish to that fancy; and often I dash'd
My limbs in the water, and suddenly splash'd
The cool drops around me, yet clung to the brink,
Chill'd by watery fears, how that Beauty might
sink
With my life in her arms to her garden, and
bind me
With its long tangled grasses, or cruelly wind me
In some eddy to hum out my life in her ear,
Like a spider-caught bee,—and in aid of that fear
Came the tardy remembrance—Oh falsest of
men!
Why was not that beauty remember'd till then?

My love, my safe love, whose glad life would have
run
Into mine—like a drop—that our fate might be
one,
That now, even now,—may-be,—clasp'd in a
dream,
That form which I gave to some jilt of the stream,
And gazed with fond eyes that her tears tried to
smother
On a mock of those eyes that I gave to another !

Then I rose from the stream, but the eyes of
my mind,
Still full of the tempter, kept gazing behind
On her crystalline face, while I painfully leapt
To the bank, and shook off the curst waters, and
wept
With my brow in the reeds ; and the reeds to my ear
Bow'd, bent by no wind, and in whispers of fear,
Growing small with large secrets, foretold me of
one
That loved me,—but oh to fly from her, and shun
Her love like a pest—though her love was as true
To mine as her stream to the heavenly blue ;
For why should I love her with love that would
bring
All misfortune, like Hate, on so joyous a thing ?
Because of her rival,—even Her whose witch-face
I had slighted, and therefore was doom'd in that
place

To roam, and had roam'd, where all horrors grew
rank,

Nine days ere I wept with my brow on that
bank;

Her name be not named, but her spite would not
fail

To our love like a blight; and they told me the tale
Of Scylla, and Picus, imprison'd to speak

His shrill-screaming woe through a woodpecker's
beak.

Then they ceased—I had heard as the voice of
my star

That told me the truth of my fortunes—thus far
I had read of my sorrow, and lay in the hush
Of deep meditation,—when lo! a light crush
Of the reeds, and I turn'd and look'd round in the
night

Of new sunshine, and saw, as I sipp'd of the light
Narrow-winking, the realized nymph of the stream,
Rising up from the wave with the bend and the
gleam

Of a fountain, and o'er her white arms she kept
throwing

Bright torrents of hair, that went flowing and
flowing

In falls to her feet, and the blue waters roll'd
Down her limbs like a garment, in many a fold,
Sun-spangled, gold-broider'd, and fled far behind,
Like an infinite train. So she came and reclined

In the reeds, and I hunger'd to see her unseal
The buds of her eyes that would ope and reveal
The blue that was in them; and they oped and
she raised

Two orbs of pure crystal, and timidly gazed
With her eyes on my eyes; but their colour and
shine

Was of that which they look'd on, and mostly of
mine—

For she loved me,—except when she blush'd, and
they sank,

Shame-humbled, to number the stones on the bank,
Or her play-idle fingers, while lisping she told me
How she put on her veil, and in love to behold me
Would wing through the sun till she fainted away
Like a mist, and then flew to her waters and lay
In love-patience long hours, and sore dazzled her
eyes

In watching for mine 'gainst the midsummer skies.
But now they were heal'd,—O my heart, it still
dances

When I think of the charm of her changeable
glances,

And my image how small when it sank in the deep
Of her eyes where her soul was,—Alas! now they
weep,

And none knoweth where. In what stream do
her eyes

Shed invisible tears? Who beholds where her
sighs

Flow in eddies, or sees the ascent of the leaf
She has pluck'd with her tresses? Who listens
her grief

Like a far fall of waters, or hears where her feet
Grow emphatic among the loose pebbles, and beat
Them together? Ah! surely her flowers float
adown

To the sea unaccepted, and little ones drown
For need of her mercy,—even he whose twin-
brother

Will miss him for ever; and the sorrowful mother
Imploreth in vain for his body to kiss

And cling to, all dripping and cold as it is,
Because that soft pity is lost in hard pain!

We loved,—how we loved!—for I thought not
again

Of the woes that were whisper'd like fears in that
place

If I gave me to beauty. Her face was the face
Far away, and her eyes were the eyes that were
drown'd

For my absence,—her arms were the arms that
sought round,

And clasp'd me to nought; for I gazed and became
Only true to my falsehood, and had but one name
For two loves, and call'd ever on Ægle, sweet
maid

Of the sky-loving waters,—and was not afraid
Of the sight of her skin;—for it never could be,
Her beauty and love were misfortunes to me!

Thus our bliss had endured for a time-shorten'd
space,
Like a day made of three, and the smile of her
face .
Had been with me for joy,—when she told me
indeed
Her love was self-task'd with a work that would
need
Some short hours, for in truth 'twas the veriest pity
Our love should not last, and then sang me a ditty,
Of one with warm lips that should love her, and
love her
When suns were burnt dim and long ages past
over.
So she fled with her voice, and I patiently nested
My limbs in the reeds, in still quiet, and rested
Till my thoughts grew extinct, and I sank in a
sleep
Of dreams,—but their meaning was hidden too
deep
To be read what their woe was;—but still it was
woe
That was writ on all faces that swam to and fro
In that river of night;—and the gaze of their eyes
Was sad,—and the bend of their brows,—and their
cries
Were seen, but I heard not. The warm touch
of tears
Travell'd down my cold cheeks, and I shook till
my fears

Awaked me, and lo! I was couch'd in a bower,
The growth of long summers rear'd up in an hour!
Then I said, in the fear of my dream, I will fly
From this magic, but could not, because that my
eye

Grew love-idle among the rich blooms; and the
earth

Held me down with its coolness of touch, and the
mirth

Of some bird was above me.—who, even in fear,
Would startle the thrush? and methought there
drew near

A form as of Ægle,—but it was not the face
Hope made, and I knew the witch-Queen of that
place,

Even Circe the Cruel, that came like a Death
Which I fear'd, and yet fled not, for want of my
breath.

There was thought in her face, and her eyes were
not raised

From the grass at her foot, but I saw, as I gazed,
Her spite—and her countenance changed with her
mind

As she plann'd how to thrall me with beauty, and
bind

My soul to her charms,—and her long tresses
play'd

From shade into shine and from shine into shade,
Like a day in mid-autumn,—first fair, O how fair!
With long snaky locks of the adder-black hair

That clung round her neck,—those dark locks that
I prize,
For the sake of a maid that once loved me with
eyes
Of that fathomless hue,—but they changed as they
rolled
And brighten'd, and suddenly blazed into gold
That she comb'd into flames, and the locks that
fell down
Turn'd dark as they fell, but I slighted their
brown,
Nor loved, till I saw the light ringlets shed wild,
That innocence wears when she is but a child;
And her eyes,—Oh I ne'er had been witch'd with
their shine,
Had they been any other, my Ægle, than thine!

Then I gave me to magic, and gazed till I
madden'd
In the full of their light,—but I sadden'd and
sadden'd
The deeper I look'd,—till I sank on the snow
Of her bosom, a thing made of terror and woe,
And answer'd its throb with the shudder of fears,
And hid my cold eyes from her eyes with my tears,
And strain'd her white arms with the still languid
weight
Of a fainting distress. There she sat like the Fate
That is nurse unto Death, and bent over in shame
To hide me from her—the true Ægle—that came

With the words on her lips the false witch had
foregiven
To make me immortal—for now I was even
At the portals of Death, who but waited the
hush
Of world-sounds in my ear to cry welcome, and
rush
With my soul to the banks of his black-flowing
river.
Oh would it had flown from my body for ever,
Ere I listen'd those words, when I felt with a
start,
The life-blood rush back in one throb to my
heart,
And saw the pale lips where the rest of that
spell
Had perish'd in horror—and heard the farewell
Of that voice that was drown'd in the dash of the
stream!
How fain had I follow'd, and plunged with that
scream
Into death, but my being indignantly lagg'd
Through the brutalized flesh that I painfully
dragg'd
Behind me:—"O Circe! O mother of spite!
Speak the last of that curse! and imprison me
quite
In the husk of a brute,—that no pity may name
The man that I was,—that no kindred may
claim

The monster I am ! Let me utterly be
Brute-buried, and Nature's dishonour with me
Uninscribed !"—But she listen'd my prayer, that
 was praise
To her malice, with smiles, and advised me to
 gaze
On the river for love,—and perchance she would
 make
In pity a maid without eyes for my sake,
And she left me like Scorn. Then I ask'd of the
 wave,
What monster I was, and it trembled and gave
The true shape of my grief, and I turn'd with my
 face
From all waters for ever, and fled through that
 place,
Till with horror more strong than all magic I
 pass'd
Its bounds, and the world was before me at last.

There I wander'd in sorrow, and shunn'd the
 abodes
Of men, that stood up in the likeness of Gods,
But I saw from afar the warm shine of the sun
On their cities, where man was a million, not
 one ;
And I saw the white smoke of their altars ascend-
 ing,
That show'd where the hearts of the many were
 blending,

And the wind in my face brought shrill voices
that came

From the trumpets that gather'd whole bands in
one fame

As a chorus of man,—and they stream'd from the
gates

Like a dusky libation pour'd out to the Fates.

But at times there were gentler processions of
peace

That I watch'd with my soul in my eyes till their
cease,

There were women! there men! but to me a
third sex

I saw them all dots—yet I loved them as specks:

And oft to assuage a sad yearning of eyes

I stole near the city, but stole covert-wise

Like a wild beast of love, and perchance to be
smitten

By some hand that I rather had wept on than
bitten!

Oh, I once had a haunt near a cot where a mother
Daily sat in the shade with her child, and would
smother

Its eyelids in kisses, and then in its sleep

Sang dreams in its ear of its manhood, while deep

In a thicket of willows I gazed o'er the brooks

That murmur'd between us and kiss'd them with
looks;

But the willows unbosom'd their secret, and never
I return'd to a spot I had startled for ever,

Though I oft long'd to know, but could ask it of
none,
Was the mother still fair, and how big was her
son?

For the haunters of fields they all shunn'd me
by flight,
The men in their horror, the women in fright;
None ever remain'd save a child once that sported
Among the wild bluebells, and playfully courted
The breeze; and beside him a speckled snake
lay
Tight strangled, because it had hiss'd him away
From the flower at his finger; he rose and drew
near
Like a Son of Immortals, one born to no fear,
But with strength of black locks and with eyes
azure bright
To grow to large manhood of merciful might.
He came, with his face of bold wonder, to feel,
The hair of my side, and to lift up my heel,
And question'd my face with wide eyes; but when
under
My lids he saw tears,—for I wept at his wonder,
He stroked me, and utter'd such kindliness then,
That the once love of women, the friendship of
men
In past sorrow, no kindness e'er came like a
kiss
On my heart in its desolate day such as this!

And I yearn'd at his cheeks in my love, and down
bent,
And lifted him up in my arms with intent
To kiss him,—but he cruel-kindly, alas !
Held out to my lips a pluck'd handful of grass !
Then I dropt him in horror, but felt as I fled
The stone he indignantly hurl'd at my head,
That dissever'd my ear,—but I felt not, whose
fate
Was to meet more distress in his love than his
hate !

Thus I wander'd, companion'd of grief and
forlorn,
Till I wish'd for that land where my being was
born,
But what was that land with its love, where my
home
Was self-shut against me ; for why should I come
Like an after-distress to my gray-bearded father,
With a blight to the last of his sight ?—let him
rather
Lament for me dead, and shed tears in the urn
Where I was not, and still in fond memory turn
To his son even such as he left him. Oh, how
Could I walk with the youth once my fellows, but
now
Like Gods to my humbled estate ?—or how bear
The steeds once the pride of my eyes and the
care

Of my hands? Then I turn'd me self-banish'd.
and came
Into Thessaly here, where I met with the same
As myself. I have heard how they met by a
stream
In games, and were suddenly changed by a scream
That made wretches of many, as she roll'd her
wild eyes
Against heaven, and so vanish'd.—The gentle and
wise
Lose their thoughts in deep studies, and others
their ill
In the mirth of mankind where they mingle them
still.

THE TWO PEACOCKS OF BEDFONT.

I.

ALAS! that breathing Vanity should go
 Where Pride is buried,—like its very ghost,
 Uprisen from the naked bones below,
 In novel flesh, clad in the silent boast
 Of gaudy silk that flutters to and fro,
 Shedding its chilling superstition most
 On young and ignorant natures—as it wont
 To haunt the peaceful churchyard of Bedfont!

II.

Each Sabbath morning, at the hour of prayer,
 Behold two maidens, up the quiet green
 Shining, far distant, in the summer air
 That flaunts their dewy robes and breathes
 between
 Their downy plumes,—sailing as if they were
 Two far-off ships,—until they brush between
 The churchyard's humble walls, and watch and
 wait
 On either side of the wide open'd gate.

III.

And there they stand—with haughty necks before
 God's holy house, that points towards the
 skies—

Frowning reluctant duty from the poor,
 And tempting homage from unthoughtful eyes :
 And Youth looks lingering from the temple door,
 Breathing its wishes in unfruitful sighs,
 With pouting lips,—forgetful of the grace,
 Of health, and smiles, on the heart-conscious
 face ;—

IV.

Because that Wealth, which has no bliss beside,
 May wear the happiness of rich attire ;
 And those two sisters, in their silly pride,
 May change the soul's warm glances for the
 fire
 Of lifeless diamonds ;—and for health denied,—
 With art, that blushes at itself, inspire
 Their languid cheeks—and flourish in a glory
 That has no life in life, nor after-story.

V.

The aged priest goes shaking his gray hair
 In meekest censuring, and turns his eye
 Earthward in grief, and heavenward in pray'r,
 And sighs, and clasps his hands, and passes by.
 Good-hearted man ! what sullen soul would wear
 Thy sorrow for a garb, and constantly

Put on thy censure, that might win the praise
Of one so gray in goodness and in days?

VI.

Also the solemn clerk partakes the shame
Of this ungodly shine of human pride,
And sadly blends his reverence and blame
In one grave bow, and passes with a stride
Impatient :—many a red-hooded dame
Turns her pain'd head, but not her glance,
aside
From wanton dress, and marvels o'er again,
That heaven hath no wet judgments for the vain.

VII.

“I have a lily in the bloom at home,”
Quoth one, “and by the blessed Sabbath day
I'll pluck my lily in its pride, and come
And read a lesson upon vain array ;—
And when stiff' silks are rustling up, and some
Give place, I'll shake it in proud eyes and
say—
Making my reverence,—‘Ladies, an you please,
King Solomon's not half so fine as these.’”

VIII.

Then her meek partner, who has nearly run
His earthly course,—“Nay, Goody, let your
text
Grow in the garden.—We have only one—

Who knows that these dim eyes may see the
next?

Summer will come again, and summer sun,
And lilies too,—but I were sorely vext
To mar my garden, and cut short the blow
Of the last lily I may live to grow.”

IX.

“The last!” quoth she, “and though the last it
were—

Lo! those two wantons, where they stand so
proud

With waving plumes, and jewels in their hair,
And painted cheeks, like Dragons to be bow’d
And curtsey’d to!—last Sabbath after pray’r,
I heard the little Tomkins ask aloud
If they were angels—but I made him know
God’s bright ones better, with a bitter blow!”

X.

So speaking, they pursue the pebbly walk
That leads to the white porch the Sunday
throng,
Hand-coupled urchins in restrained talk,
And anxious pedagogue that chastens wrong,
And posied churchwarden with solemn stalk,
And gold-bedizen’d beadle flames along,
And gentle peasant clad in buff and green,
Like a meek cowslip in the spring serene;

XI.

And blushing maiden—modestly array'd
 In spotless white,—still conscious of the glass;
 And she, the lonely widow, that hath made
 A sable covenant with grief,—alas!
 She veils her tears under the deep, deep shade,
 While the poor kindly-hearted, as they pass,
 Bend to unclouded childhood, and caress
 Her boy,—so rosy!—and so fatherless!

XII.

Thus, as good Christians ought, they all draw
 near
 The fair white temple, to the timely call
 Of pleasant bells that tremble in the ear.—
 Now the last frock, and scarlet hood, and shawl
 Fade into dusk, in the dim atmosphere
 Of the low porch, and heav'n has won them
 all,
 —Saving those two, that turn aside and pass,
 In velvet blossom, where all flesh is grass.

XIII.

Ah me! to see their silken manors trail'd
 In purple luxuries—with restless gold,—
 Flaunting the grass where widowhood has wail'd
 In blotted black,—over the heapy mould
 Panting wave-wantonly! They never quail'd
 How the warm vanity abused the cold;

Nor saw the solemn faces of the gone
 Sadly uplooking through transparent stone :

XIV.

But swept their dwellings with unquiet light,
 Shocking the awful presence of the dead ;
 Where gracious natures would their eyes benight,
 Nor wear their being with a lip too red,
 Nor move too rudely in the summer bright
 Of sun, but put staid sorrow in their tread,
 Meting it into steps, with inward breath,
 In very pity to bereaved death.

XV.

Now in the church, time-sober'd minds resign
 To solemn pray'r, and the loud chaunted
 hymn,—
 With glowing picturings of joys divine
 Painting the mistlight where the roof is dim ;
 But youth looks upward to the window shine,
 Warming with rose and purple and the swim
 Of gold, as if thought-tinted by the stains
 Of gorgeous light through many-colour'd panes ;

XVI.

Soiling the virgin snow wherein God hath
 Enrobed his angels,—and with absent eyes
 Hearing of Heav'n, and its directed path,
 Thoughtful of slippers,—and the glorious skies
 Clouding with satin,—till the preacher's wrath

Consumes his pity, and he glows, and cries
 With a deep voice that trembles in its might,
 And earnest eyes grown eloquent in light :

XVII.

“ Oh, that the vacant eye would learn to look
 On very beauty, and the heart embrace
 True loveliness, and from this holy book
 Drink the warm-breathing tenderness and
 grace
 Of love indeed ! Oh, that the young soul took
 Its virgin passion from the glorious face
 Of fair religion, and address'd its strife,
 To win the riches of eternal life !

XVIII.

“ Doth the vain heart love glory that is none,
 And the poor excellence of vain attire ?
 Oh go, and drown your eyes against the sun,
 The visible ruler of the starry quire,
 Till boiling gold in giddy eddies run,
 Dazzling the brain with orbs of living fire ;
 And the faint soul down darkens into night,
 And dies a burning martyrdom to light.

XIX.

“ Oh go, and gaze,—when the low winds of ev'n
 Breathe hymns, and Nature's many forests nod
 Their gold-crown'd heads ; and the rich blooms
 of heav'n

Sun-ripen'd give their blushes up to God ;
 And mountain-rocks and cloudy steeps are riv'n
 By founts of fire, as smitten by the rod
 Of heavenly Moses,—that your thirsty sense
 May quench its longings of magnificence !

XX.

“ Yet suns shall perish—stars shall fade away—
 Day into darkness—darkness into death—
 Death into silence ; the warm light of day,
 The blooms of summer, the rich glowing breath
 Of even—all shall wither and decay,
 Like the frail furniture of dreams beneath
 The touch of morn—or bubbles of rich dyes
 That break and vanish in the aching eyes.”

XXI.

‘ They hear, soul-blushing, and repentant shed
 Unwholesome thoughts in wholesome tears, and
 pour
 Their sin to earth,—and with low drooping head
 Receive the solemn blessing, and implore
 Its grace—then soberly with chasten'd tread,
 They meekly press towards the gusty door,
 With humbled eyes that go to graze upon
 The lowly grass—like him of Babylon.

XXII.

The lowly grass !—O water-constant mind !
 Fast-ebbing holiness !—soon-fading grace

Of serious thought, as if the gushing wind
 Through the low porch had wash'd it from the face
 For ever!—How they lift their eyes to find
 Old vanities!—Pride wins the very place
 Of meekness, like a bird, and flutters now
 With idle wings on the curl-conscious brow!

XXIII.

And lo! with eager looks they seek the way
 Of old temptation at the lowly gate;
 To feast on feathers, and on vain array,
 And painted cheeks, and the rich glistening state
 Of jewel-sprinkled locks.—But where are they,
 The graceless haughty ones that used to wait
 With lofty neck, and nods, and stiffen'd eye?—
 None challenge the old homage bending by.

XXIV.

In vain they look for the ungracious bloom
 Of rich apparel where it glow'd before,—
 For Vanity has faded all to gloom,
 And lofty Pride has stiffen'd to the core,
 For impious Life to tremble at its doom,—
 Set for a warning token evermore,
 Whereon, as now, the giddy and the wise
 Shall gaze with lifted hands and wond'ring eyes.

XXV.

The aged priest goes on each sabbath morn,
 But shakes not sorrow under his gray hair;

The solemn clerk goes lavender'd and shorn,
 Nor stoops his back to the ungodly pair ;—
 And ancient lips that pucker'd up in scorn,
 Go smoothly breathing to the house of pray'r ;
 And in the garden-plot, from day to day,
 The lily blooms its long white life away.

XXVI.

And where two haughty maidens used to be,
 In pride of plume, where plummy Death had
 trod,
 Trailing their gorgeous velvets wantonly,
 Most unmeet pall, over the holy sod ;—
 There, gentle stranger, thou may'st only see
 Two sombre Peacocks.—Age, with sapient
 nod
 Marking the spot, still tarries to declare
 How they once lived, and wherefore they are
 there.

THE TWO SWANS.

A FAIRY TALE.

I.

IMMORTAL Imogen, crown'd queen above
The lilies of thy sex, vouchsafe to hear
A fairy dream in honour of true love—
True above ills, and frailty, and all fear—
Perchance a shadow of his own career
Whose youth was darkly prison'd and long
twined
By serpent-sorrow, till white Love drew near,
And sweetly sang him free, and round his mind
A bright horizon threw, wherein no grief may
wind.

II.

I saw a tower builded on a lake,
Mock'd by its inverse shadow, dark and deep—
That seem'd a still intenser night to make,
Wherein the quiet waters sunk to sleep,—
And, whatso'er was prison'd in that keep,
A monstrous Snake was warden:—round and
round

In sable ringlets I beheld him creep
Blackest amid black shadows to the ground,
Whilst his enormous head the topmost turret
crown'd.

III.

From whence he shot fierce light against the
stars,
Making the pale moon paler with affright ;
And with his ruby eye out-threaten'd Mars—
That blazed in the mid-heavens, hot and
bright—
Nor slept, nor wink'd, but with a steadfast spite
Watch'd their wan looks and tremblings in the
skies ;
And that he might not slumber in the night,
The curtain-lids were pluck'd from his large
eyes,
So he might never drowse, but watch his secret
prize.

IV.

Prince or princess in dismal durance pent,
Victims of old Enchantment's love or hate,
Their lives must all in painful sighs be spent,
Watching the lonely waters soon and late,
And clouds that pass and leave them to their
fate,
Or company their grief with heavy tears :—
Meanwhile that Hope can spy no golden gate
For sweet escapement, but in darksome fears
They weep and pine away as if immortal years.

V.

No gentle bird with gold upon its wing
Will perch upon the grate—the gentle bird
Is safe in leafy dell, and will not bring
Freedom's sweet key-note and commission
word

Learn'd of a fairy's lips, for pity stirr'd—
Lest while he trembling sings, untimely guest!
Watch'd by that cruel Snake and darkly heard,
He leave a widow on her lonely nest,
To press in silent grief the darlings of her breast.

VI.

No gallant knight, adventurous, in his bark,
Will seek the fruitful perils of the place,
To rouse with dipping oar the waters dark
That bear that serpent-image on their face.
And Love, brave Love! though he attempt
the base,
Nerved to his loyal death, he may not win
His captive lady from the strict embrace
Of that foul Serpent, clasping her within
His sable folds—like Eve enthrall'd by the old
Sin.

VII.

But there is none—no knight in panoply,
Nor Love, intrench'd in his strong steely coat.
No little speck—no sail—no helper nigh,
No sign—no whispering—no plash of boat:—

The distant shores show dimly and remote,
Made of a deeper mist,—serene and gray,—
And slow and mute the cloudy shadows float
Over the gloomy wave, and pass away,
Chased by the silver beams that on their margins
play.

VIII.

And bright and silvery the willows sleep
Over the shady verge—no mad winds tease
Their hoary heads ; but quietly they weep
There sprinkling leaves—half fountains and half
trees :

There lilies be—and fairer than all these,
A solitary Swan her breast of snow
Launches against the wave that seems to
freeze
Into a chaste reflection, still below
Twin-shadow of herself wherever she may go.

IX.

And forth she paddles in the very noon
Of solemn midnight like an elfin thing.
Charm'd into being by the argent moon—
Whose silver light for love of her fair wing
Goes with her in the shade, still worshipping
Her dainty plumage :—all around her grew
A radiant circlet, like a fairy ring ;
And all behind, a tiny little clue
Of light, to guide her back across the waters
blue.

X.

And sure she is no meaner than a fay,
Redeem'd from sleepy death, for beauty's sake,
By old ordainment:—silent as she lay,
Touch'd by a moonlight wand I saw her wake,
And cut her leafy slough, and so forsake
The verdant prison of her lily peers,
That slept amidst the stars upon the lake—
A breathing shape—restored to human fears,
And new-born love and grief—self-conscious of
her tears.

XI.

And now she clasps her wings around her heart,
And near that lonely isle begins to glide
Pale as her fears, and oftentimes with a start
Turns her impatient head from side to side
In universal terrors—all too wide
To watch; and often to that marble keep
Upturns her pearly eyes, as if she spied
Some foe, and crouches in the shadows steep
That in the gloomy wave go diving fathoms deep.

XII.

And well she may, to spy that fearful thing
All down the dusky walls in circlets wound;
Alas! for what rare prize, with many a ring
Girding the marble casket round and round?
His folded tail, lost in the gloom profound,
Terribly darkeneth the rocky base;

But on the top his monstrous head is crown'd
With prickly spears, and on his doubtful face
Gleam his unwearied eyes, red watchers of the
place.

XIII.

Alas ! of the hot fires that nightly fall,
No one will scorch him in those orbs of spite,
So he may never see beneath the wall
That timid little creature, all too bright,
That stretches her fair neck, slender and white,
Invoking the pale moon, and vainly tries
Her throbbing throat, as if to charm the night
With song—but, hush—it perishes in sighs,
And there will be no dirge, sad swelling though
she dies !

XIV.

She droops—she sinks—she leans upon the lake,
Fainting again into a lifeless flower ;
But soon the chilly springs anoint and wake
Her spirit from its death, and with new power
She sheds her stifled sorrows in a shower
Of tender song, timed to her falling tears—
That wins the shady summit of that tower,
And, trembling all the sweeter for its fears,
Fills with imploring moan that cruel monster's
ears.

XV.

And, lo ! the scaly beast is all deprest,
Subdued like Argus by the might of sound—
What time Apollo his sweet lute addrest

To magic converse with the air, and bound
The many monster eyes, all slumber-drown'd :—
So on the turret-top that watchful Snake
Pillows his giant head, and lists profound,
As if his wrathful spite would never wake,
Charm'd into sudden sleep for Love and Beauty's
sake !

XVI.

His prickly crest lies prone upon his crown,
And thirsty lip from lip disparted flies,
To drink that dainty flood of music down—
His scaly throat is big with pent-up sighs—
And whilst his hollow ear entrancèd lies,
His looks for envy of the charmed sense
Are fain to listen, till his steadfast eyes,
Stung into pain by their own impotence,
Distil enormous tears into the lake immense.

XVII.

Oh, tuneful Swan ! Oh, melancholy bird !
Sweet was that midnight miracle of song,
Rich with ripe sorrow, needful of no word
To tell of pain, and love, and love's deep
wrong—
Hinting a piteous tale—perchance how long
Thy unknown tears were mingled with the lake,
What time disguised thy leafy mates among—
And no eye knew what human love and ache
Dwelt in those dewy leaves, and heart so nigh to
break.

XVIII.

Therefore no poet will ungently touch
The water-lily, on whose eyelids dew
Trembles like tears ; but ever hold it such
As human pain may wander through and
 through,
Turning the pale leaf paler in its hue—
Wherein life dwells, transfigured, not entomb'd,
By magic spells. Alas ! who ever knew
Sorrow in all its shapes, leafy and plumed,
Or in gross husks of brutes eternally inhumed ?

XIX.

And now the winged song has scaled the height
Of that dark dwelling, buildd for despair,
And soon a little casement flashing bright
Widens self-open'd into the cool air—
That music like a bird may enter there
And soothe the captive in his stony cage ;
For there is nought of grief, or painful care,
But plaintive song may happily engage
From sense of its own ill, and tenderly assuage.

XX.

And forth into the light, small and remote,
A creature, like the fair son of a king,
Draws to the lattice in his jewell'd coat
Against the silver moonlight glistening,
And leans upon his white hand listening

To that sweet music that with tenderer tone
Salutes him, wondering what kindly thing
Is come to soothe him with so tuneful moan,
Singing beneath the walls as if for him alone!

XXI.

And while he listens, the mysterious song,
Woven with timid particles of speech,
Twines into passionate words that grieve along
The melancholy notes, and softly teach
The secrets of true love,—that trembling reach
His earnest ear, and through the shadows dun
He missions like replies, and each to each
Their silver voices mingle into one,
Like blended streams that make one music as
they run.

XXII.

“Ah! Love, my hope is swooning in my
heart,—
Aye, sweet, my cage is strong and hung full
high—
Alas! our lips are held so far apart,
Thy words come faint, they have so far to
fly!—
If I may only shun that serpent-eye,—
Ah me! that serpent-eye doth never sleep;—
Then, nearer thee, Love’s martyr, I will die!—
Alas, alas! that word has made me weep!
For pity’s sake remain safe in thy marble
keep!

XXIII.

My marble keep ! it is my marble tomb—
Nay, sweet ! but thou hast there thy living
breath—

Aye to expend in sighs for this hard doom ;—
But I will come to thee and sing beneath,
And nightly so beguile this serpent wreath ;—
Nay, I will find a path from these despairs.
Ah, needs then thou must tread the back of
death,

Making his stony ribs thy stony stairs.—
Behold his ruby eye, how fearfully it glares !”

XXIV.

Full sudden at these words, the princely youth
Leaps on the scaly back that slumbers, still
Unconscious of his foot, yet not for ruth,
But numb'd to dulness by the fairy skill
Of that sweet music (all more wild and shrill
For intense fear) that charm'd him as he lay—
Meanwhile the lover nerves his desperate will,
Held some short throbs by natural dismay,
Then down, down the serpent-track begins his
darksome way.

XXV.

Now dimly seen—now toiling out of sight,
Eclipsed and cover'd by the envious wall ;
Now fair and spangled in the sudden light,

And clinging with wide arms for fear of fall ;
Now dark and shelter'd by a kindly pall
Of dusky shadow from his wakeful foe ;
Slowly he winds adown—dimly and small,
Watch'd by the gentle Swan that sings below,
Her hope increasing, still, the larger he doth
grow.

XXVI.

But nine times nine the serpent folds embrace
The marble walls about—which he must tread
Before his anxious foot may touch the base :
Long is the dreary path, and must be sped !
But Love, that holds the mastery of dread,
Braces his spirit, and with constant toil
He wins his way, and now, with arms out-
spread,
Impatient plunges from the last long coil :
So may all gentle Love ungentle Malice foil.

XXVII.

The song is hush'd, the charm is all complete,
And two fair Swans are swimming on the
lake :
But scarce their tender bills have time to meet,
When fiercely drops adown that cruel Snake—
His steely scales a fearful rustling make,
Like autumn leaves that tremble and foretell
The sable storm ;—the plummy lovers quake—
And feel the troubled waters pant and swell,
Heaved by the giant bulk of their pursuer fell.

XXVIII.

His jaws, wide yawning like the gates of Death,
Hiss horrible pursuit—his red eyes glare
The waters into blood—his eager breath
Grows hot upon their plumes :—now, minstrel
fair!

She drops her ring into the waves, and there
It widens all around, a fairy ring
Wrought of the silver light—the fearful pair
Swim in the very midst, and pant and cling
The closer for their fears, and tremble wing to
wing.

XXIX.

Bending their course over the pale gray lake,
Against the pallid East, wherein light play'd
In tender flushes, still the baffled Snake
Circled them round continually, and bay'd
Hoarsely and loud, forbidden to invade
The sanctuary ring—his sable mail
Roll'd darkly through the flood, and writhed
and made

A shining track over the waters pale,
Lash'd into boiling foam by his enormous tail.

XXX.

And so they sail'd into the distance dim,
Into the very distance—small and white,
Like snowy blossoms of the spring that swim
Over the brooklets—follow'd by the spite

Of that huge Serpent, that with wild affright
Worried them on their course, and sore annoy,
Till on the grassy marge I saw them 'light,
And change, anon, a gentle girl and boy,
Lock'd in embrace of sweet unutterable joy !

XXXI.

Then came the Morn, and with her pearly
showers
Wept on them, like a mother, in whose eyes
Tears are no grief; and from his rosy bowers
The Oriental sun began to rise,
Chasing the darksome shadows from the skies;
Wherewith that sable Serpent far away
Fled, like a part of night—delicious sighs
From waking blossoms purified the day,
And little birds were singing sweetly from each
spray.

THE DREAM OF EUGENE ARAM.

'Twas in the prime of summer time,
 An evening calm and cool,
 And four-and-twenty happy boys
 Came bounding out of school :
 There were some that ran and some that leapt,
 Like troutlets in a pool.

Away they sped with gamesome minds,
 And souls untouch'd by sin ;
 To a level mead they came, and there
 They drave the wickets in :
 Pleasantly shone the setting sun
 Over the town of Lynn.

Like sportive deer they coursed about,
 And shouted as they ran,—
 Turning to mirth all things of earth,
 As only boyhood can ;
 But the Usher sat remote from all,
 A melancholy man !

His hat was off, his vest apart,
 . To catch heaven's blessed breeze ;
 For a burning thought was in his brow,

And his bosom ill at ease :
 So he lean'd his head on his hands, and read
 The book between his knees !

Leaf after leaf he turn'd it o'er,
 Nor ever glanced aside,
 For the peace of his soul he read that book
 In the golden eventide :
 Much study had made him very lean,
 And pale, and leaden-eyed.

At last he shut the ponderous tome,
 With a fast and fervent grasp
 He strain'd the dusky covers close,
 And fix'd the brazen hasp :
 "Oh, God ! could I so close my mind,
 And clasp it with a clasp !"

Then leaping on his feet upright,
 Some moody turns he took,—
 Now up the mead, then down the mead,
 And past a shady nook,—
 And, lo ! he saw a little boy
 That pored upon a book !

"My gentle lad, what is 't you read—
 Romance or fairy fable ?
 Or is it some historic page,
 Of kings and crowns unstable ?"
 The young boy gave an upward glance,—
 "It is 'The Death of Abel.'"

The Usher took six hasty strides,
As smit with sudden pain,—
Six hasty strides beyond the place,
Then slowly back again ;
And down he sat beside the lad,
And talk'd with him of Cain ;

And, long since then, of bloody men,
Whose deeds tradition saves ;
Of lonely folk cut off unseen,
And hid in sudden graves ;
Of horrid stabs, in groves forlorn,
And murders done in caves ;

And how the sprites of injured men
Shriek upward from the sod,—
* Aye, how the ghostly hand will point
To shew the burial clod ;
And unknown facts of guilty acts
Are seen in dreams from God !

He told how murderers walk the earth
Beneath the curse of Cain,—
With crimson clouds before their eyes,
And flames about their brain :
For blood has left upon their souls
Its everlasting stain !

“ And well,” quoth he, “ I know, for truth,
Their pangs must be extreme,—
Woe, woe, unutterable woe,—

Who spill life's sacred stream !
 For why? Methought, last night, I wrought
 A murder, in a dream !

"One that had never done me wrong—
 A feeble man and old ;
 I led him to a lonely field,—
 The moon shone clear and cold :
 Now here, said I, this man shall die,
 And I will have his gold !

"Two sudden blows with a ragged stick,
 And one with a heavy stone,
 One hurried gash with a hasty knife,—
 And then the deed was done :
 There was nothing lying at my foot
 But lifeless flesh and bone !

"Nothing but lifeless flesh and bone,
 That could not do me ill ;
 And yet I fear'd him all the more,
 For lying there so still :
 There was a manhood in his look,
 That murder could not kill !

"And, lo ! the universal air
 Seem'd lit with ghastly flame ;—
 Ten thousand thousand dreadful eyes
 Were looking down in blame :
 I took the dead man by his hand,
 And call'd upon his name !

“ Oh, God ! it made me quake to see
Such sense within the slain !
But when I touch'd the lifeless clay,
The blood gush'd out amain !
For every clot, a burning spot
Was scorching in my brain !

“ My head was like an ardent coal,
My heart as solid ice ;
My wretched, wretched soul, I knew,
Was at the Devil's price :
A dozen times I groan'd ; the dead
Had never groan'd but twice !

“ And now, from forth the frowning sky,
From the Heaven's topmost height,
I heard a voice—the awful voice
Of the blood-avenging sprite :—
' Thou guilty man ! take up thy dead
And hide it from my sight !'

“ I took the dreary body up,
And cast it in a stream,—
A sluggish water, black as ink,
The depth was so extreme :—
My gentle Boy, remember this
Is nothing but a dream !

“ Down went the corse with a hollow plunge.
And vanish'd in the pool ;
Anon I cleansed my bloody hands,

And wash'd my forehead cool,
 And sat among the urchins young,
 That evening in the school.

“ Oh, Heaven ! to think of their white souls,
 And mine so black and grim !
 I could not share in childish prayer,
 Nor join in Evening Hymn :
 Like a Devil of the Pit I seem'd, “
 'Mid holy Cherubim !

“ And peace went with them, one and all,
 And each calm pillow spread ;
 But Guilt was my grim Chamberlain
 That lighted me to bed ;
 And drew my midnight curtains round,
 With fingers bloody red !

“ All night I lay in agony,
 In anguish dark and deep,
 My fever'd eyes I dared not close,
 But stared aghast at Sleep :
 For Sin had render'd unto her
 The keys of Hell to keep !

“ All night I lay in agony,
 From weary chime to chime,
 With one besetting horrid hint,
 That rack'd me all the time ;
 A mighty yearning, like the first
 Fierce impulse unto crime !

“ One stern tyrannic thought, that made
 All other thoughts its slave;
Stronger and stronger every pulse
 Did that temptation crave,—
Still urging me to go and see
 The Dead Man in his grave !

“ Heavily I rose up, as soon
 As light was in the sky,
And sought the black accursed pool
 With a wild misgiving eye ;
And I saw the Dead in the river bed,
 For the faithless stream was dry.

“ Merrily rose the lark, and shook
 The dew-drop from its wing ;
But I never mark'd its morning flight,
 I never heard it sing :
For I was stooping once again
 Under the horrid thing.

“ With breathless speed, like a soul in chase,
 I took him up and ran ;—
There was no time to dig a grave
 Before the day began :
In a lonesome wood, with heaps of leaves,
 I hid the murder'd man !

“ And all that day I read in school,
 But my thought was other where ;
As soon as the mid-day task was done,

In secret I was there :
And a mighty wind had swept the leaves,
And still the corse was bare !

“ Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep :
Or land or sea, though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.

“ So wills the fierce avenging Sprite,
Till blood for blood atones !
Aye, though he 's buried in a cave,
And trodden down with stones,
And years have rotted off his flesh,—
The world shall see his bones !

“ Oh, God ! that horrid, horrid dream
Besets me now awake !
Again—again, with dizzy brain,
The human life I take ;
And my red right hand grows raging hot,
Like Cranmer's at the stake.

“ And still no peace for the restless clay,
Will wave or mould allow ;
The horrid thing pursues my soul,—
It stands before me now ! ”
The fearful Boy look'd up, and saw
Huge drops upon his brow.

That very night, while gentle sleep
 The urchin eyelids kiss'd,
Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,
 Through the cold and heavy mist;
And Eugene Aram walk'd between,
 With gyves upon his wrist.

THE ELM TREE:

A DREAM IN THE WOODS.

"And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees." AS YOU LIKE IT.

'Twas in a shady Avenue,
Where lofty Elms abound—
And from a Tree
There came to me
A sad and solemn sound,
That sometimes murmur'd overhead,
And sometimes underground.

Amongst the leaves it seem'd to sigh,
Amid the boughs to moan;
It mutter'd in the stem, and then
The roots took up the tone;
As if beneath the dewy grass
The dead began to groan.

No breeze there was to stir the leaves;
No bolts that tempests launch,
To rend the trunk or rugged bark;

No gale to bend the branch ;
No quake of earth to heave the roots,
That stood so stiff and stanch.
No bird was preening up aloft,
To rustle with its wing ;
No squirrel, in its sport or fear,
From bough to bough to spring ;
The solid bole
Had ne'er a hole
To hide a living thing !

No scooping hollow cell to lodge
A furtive beast or fowl,
The martin, bat,
Or forest cat
That nightly loves to prowl,
Nor ivy nook so apt to shroud
The moping, snoring owl.

But still the sound was in my ear,
A sad and solemn sound,
That sometimes murmur'd overhead,
And sometimes underground—
'Twas in a shady Avenue
Where lofty Elms abound.

O hath the Dryad still a tongue
In this ungenial clime ?
Have Sylvan Spirits still a voice
As in the classic prime—

To make the forest voluble,
As in the olden time ?

The olden time is dead and gone ;
Its years have fill'd their sum—
And e'en in Greece—her native Greece—
The Sylvan Nymph is dumb—
From Ash, and Beech, and aged Oak,
No classic whispers come.

From Poplar, Pine, and drooping Birch,
And fragrant Linden Trees ;
No living sound
E'er hovers round,
Unless the vagrant breeze,
The music of the merry bird,
Or hum of busy bees.

But busy bees forsake the Elm
That bears no bloom aloft—
The Finch was in the hawthorn-bush,
The Blackbird in the croft ;
And among the firs the brooding Dove,
That else might murmur soft.

Yet still I heard that solemn sound,
And sad it was to boot,
From ev'ry overhanging bough,
And each minuter shoot ;
From rugged trunk and mossy rind,
And from the twisted root.

From these,—a melancholy moan ;
From those,—a dreary sigh ;
As if the boughs were wintry bare,
And wild winds sweeping by—
Whereas the smallest fleecy cloud
Was steadfast in the sky.

No sign or touch of stirring air
Could either sense observe—
The zephyr had not breath enough
The thistle-down to swerve,
Or force the filmy gossamers
To take another curve.

In still and silent slumber hush'd
All Nature seem'd to be :
From heaven above, or earth beneath,
No whisper came to me—
Except the solemn sound and sad
From that MYSTERIOUS TREE !

A hollow, hollow, hollow sound,
As is that dreamy roar
When distant billows boil and bound
Along a shingly shore—
But the ocean brim was far aloof,
A hundred miles or more.

No murmur of the gusty sea,
No tumult of the beach,

However they may foam and fret,
The bounded sense could reach—
Methought the trees in mystic tongue
Were talking each to each!—

Mayhap, rehearsing ancient tales
Of greenwood love or guilt,
Of whisper'd vows
Beneath their boughs ;
Or blood obscurely spilt ;
Or of that near-hand Mansion House
A Royal Tudor built.

Perchance, of booty won or shared
Beneath the starry cope—
Or where the suicidal wretch
Hung up the fatal rope ;
Or Beauty kept an evil tryste,
Insnares by Love and Hope.

Of graves, perchance, untimely scoop'd
At midnight dark and dank—
And what is underneath the sod
Whereon the grass is rank—
Of old intrigues,
And privy leagues,
Tradition leaves in blank.

Of traitor lips that mutter'd plots—
Of Kin who fought and fell—

God knows the undiscover'd schemes,
The arts and acts of Hell,
Perform'd long generations since,
If trees had tongues to tell !

With wary eyes, and ears alert,
As one who walks afraid,
I wander'd down the dappled path
Of mingled light and shade—
How sweetly gleam'd that arch of blue
Beyond the green arcade !

How cheerly shone the glimpse of Heav'n
Beyond that verdant aisle !
All overarch'd with lofty elms,
That quench'd the light, the while,
As dim and chill
As serves to fill
Some old Cathedral pile !

And many a gnarlèd trunk was there,
That ages long had stood,
Till Time had wrought them into shapes
Like Pan's fantastic brood ;
Or still more foul and hideous forms
That Pagans carve in wood !

A crouching Satyr lurking here—
And there a Goblin grim—
As staring full of demon life

As Gothic sculptor's whim—
A marvel it had scarcely been
To hear a voice from him !

Some whisper from that horrid mouth
Of strange, unearthly tone ;
Or wild infernal laugh, to chill
One's marrow in the bone.
But no—it grins like rigid Death,
And silent as a stone !

As silent as its fellows be,
For all is mute with them—
The branch that climbs the leafy roof—
The rough and mossy stem—
The crooked root,
And tender shoot,
Where hangs the dewy gem.

One mystic Tree alone there is,
Of sad and solemn sound—
That sometimes murmurs overhead,
And sometimes underground—
In all that shady Avenue,
Where lofty Elms abound.

PART II.

The Scene is changed ! No green Arcade,
No Trees all ranged a-row—
But scatter'd like a beaten host,
Dispersing to and fro ;
With here and there a sylvan corse,
That fell before the foe.

The Foe that down in yonder dell
Pursues his daily toil ;
As witness many a prostrate trunk,
Bereft of leafy spoil,
Hard by its wooden stump, whereon
The adder loves to coil.

Alone he works—his ringing blows
Have banish'd bird and beast ;
The Hind and Fawn have canter'd off
A hundred yards at least ;
And on the maple's lofty top,
The linnet's song has ceased.

No eye his labour overlooks,
Or when he takes his rest ;
Except the timid thrush that peeps
Above her secret nest,
Forbid by love to leave the young
Beneath her speckled breast.

The Woodman's heart is in his work,
His axe is sharp and good :
With sturdy arm and steady aim
He smites the gaping wood ;
From distant rocks
His lusty knocks
Re-echo many a rood.

His axe is keen, his arm is strong ;
The muscles serve him well ;
His years have reach'd an extra span,
The number none can tell ;
But still his lifelong task has been
The Timber Tree to fell.

Through Summer's parching sultriness,
And Winter's freezing cold,
From sapling youth
To virile growth,
And Age's rigid mould,
His energetic axe hath rung
Within that Forest old.

Aloft, upon his poising steel
The vivid sunbeams glance—
About his head and round his feet
The forest shadows dance ;
And bounding from his russet coat
The acorn drops askance.

His face is like a Druid's face,
 With wrinkles furrow'd deep,
And tann'd by scorching suns as brown
 As corn that's ripe to reap;
But the hair on brow, and cheek, and chin,
 Is white as wool of sheep.

His frame is like a giant's frame;
 His legs are long and stark;
His arms like limbs of knotted yew;
 His hands like rugged bark;
 So he felleth still
 With right good will,
As if to build an Ark!

Oh! well within *His* fatal path
 The fearful Tree might quake
Through every fibre, twig, and leaf,
 With aspen tremour shake;
 Through trunk and root,
 And branch and shoot,
A low complaining make!

Oh! well to *Him* the Tree might breathe
 A sad and solemn sound,
A sigh that murmur'd overhead,
 And groans from underground;
As in that shady Avenue
 Where lofty Elms abound!

But calm and mute the Maple stands
The Plane, the Ash, the Fir,
The Elm, the Beech, the drooping Birch,
Without the least demur ;
And e'en the Aspen's hoary leaf
Makes no unusual stir.

The Pines—those old gigantic Pines,
That writhe—recalling soon
The famous Human Group that writhes
With Snakes in wild festoon—
In ramous wrestlings interlaced
A Forest Læocoon—

Like Titans of primeval girth
By tortures overcome,
Their brown enormous limbs they twine,
Bedew'd with tears of gum—
Fierce agonies that ought to yell,
But, like the marble, dumb.

Nay, yonder blasted Elm that stands
So like a man of sin,
Who, frantic, flings his arms abroad
To feel the Worm within—
For all that gesture, so intense,
It makes no sort of din !

An universal silence reigns
In rugged bark or peel,

Except that very trunk which rings
 Beneath the biting steel—
Meanwhile the Woodman plies his axe
 With unrelenting zeal !

No rustic song is on his tongue,
 No whistle on his lips ;
But with a quiet thoughtfulness
 His trusty tool he grips,
And, stroke on stroke, keeps hacking out
 The bright and flying chips.

Stroke after stroke, with frequent dint
 He spreads the fatal gash ;
Till, lo ! the remnant fibres rend,
 With harsh and sudden crash,
And on the dull resounding turf
 The jarring branches lash !

Oh ! now the Forest Trees may sigh,
 The Ash, the Poplar tall,
The Elm, the Beech, the drooping Birch,
 The Aspens—one and all,
 With solemn groan
 And hollow moan
Lament a comrade's fall !

A goodly Elm, of noble girth,
 That, thrice the human span—
While on their variegated course

The constant Seasons ran—
Through gale, and hail, and fiery bolt,
Had stood erect as Man.

But now, like mortal Man himself,
Struck down by hand of God,
Or heathen Idol tumbled prone
Beneath th' Eternal's nod,
In all its giant bulk and length
It lies along the sod !

Aye, now the Forest Trees may grieve
And make a common moan
Around that patriarchal trunk
So newly overthrown ;
And with a murmur recognize
A doom to be their own !

The Echo sleeps : the idle axe,
A disregarded tool,
Lies crumbling with its passive weight
The toad's reputed stool—
The Woodman wipes his dewy brow
Within the shadows cool.

No Zephyr stirs : the ear may catch
The smallest insect-hum ;
But on the disappointed sense
No mystic whispers come ;
No tone of sylvan sympathy,
The Forest Trees are dumb.

No leafy noise, nor inward voice,
No sad and solemn sound,
That sometimes murmurs overhead,
And sometimes underground;
As in that shady Avenue,
Where lofty Elms abound!

PART III.

The deed is done: the Tree is low
That stood so long and firm;
The Woodman and his axe are gone,
His toil has found its term;
And where he wrought, the speckled Thrush,
Securely hunts the worm.

The Cony from the sandy bank
Has run a rapid race,
Through thistle, bent, and tangled fern,
To seek the open space;
And on its haunches sits erect
To clean its furry face.

The dappled Fawn is close at hand,
The Hind is browsing near,—
And on the Larch's lowest bough
The Ousel whistles clear;

But checks the note
Within its throat,
As choked with sudden fear!

With sudden fear her wormy quest
The Thrush abruptly quits—
Through thistle, bent, and tangled fern
The startled Cony flits;
And on the Larch's lowest bough
No more the Ousel sits.

With sudden fear
The dappled Deer
Effect a swift escape;
But well might bolder creatures start,
And fly, or stand agape,
With rising hair and curdled blood,
To see so grim a Shape!

The very sky turns pale above;
The earth grows dark beneath;
The human Terror thrills with cold,
And draws a shorter breath—
An universal panic owns
The dread approach of DEATH!

With silent pace, as shadows come,
And dark as shadows be,
The grisly Phantom takes his stand
Beside the fallen Tree,

And scans it with his gloomy eyes,
And laughs with horrid glee

A dreary laugh and desolate,
Where mirth is void and null,
As hollow as its echo sounds
Within the hollow skull—
“Whoever laid this tree along,
His hatchet was not dull!

“The human arm and human tool
Have done their duty well!
But after sound of ringing axe
Must sound the ringing knell;
When Elm or Oak
Have felt the stroke
My turn it is to fell!

“No passive unregarded tree,
A senseless thing of wood,
Wherein the sluggish sap ascends
To swell the vernal bud—
But conscious, moving, breathing trunks
That throb with living blood!

“No forest Monarch yearly clad
In mantle green or brown;
That unrecorded lives, and falls
By hand of rustic clown—
But Kings who don the purple robe,
And wear the jewell'd crown.

“ Ah! little recks the Royal mind,
Within his Banquet Hall,
While tapers shine and Music breathes
And Beauty leads the Ball,—
He little recks the oaken plank
Shall be his palace wall!

“ Ah, little dreams the haughty Peer,
The while his Falcon flies—
Or on the blood-bedabbled turf
The antler'd quarry dies—
That in his own ancestral Park
The narrow dwelling lies.

“ But haughty Peer and mighty King
One doom shall overwhelm!
The oaken cell
Shall lodge him well
Whose sceptre ruled a realm—
While he who never knew a home,
Shall find it in the Elm!

“ The tatter'd, lean, dejected wretch,
Who begs from door to door,
And dies within the cressy ditch,
Or on the barren moor,
The friendly Elm shall lodge and clothe
That houseless man and poor!

“ Yea, this recumbent rugged trunk,
That lies so long and prone,

With many a fallen acorn-cup,
And mast and firry cone—
This rugged trunk shall hold its share
Of mortal flesh and bone !

“ A Miser hoarding heaps of gold,
But pale with ague-fears—
A Wife lamenting love’s decay,
With secret cruel tears,
Distilling bitter, bitter drops
From sweets of former years—

“ A Man within whose gloomy mind
Offence had darkly sunk,
Who out of fierce Revenge’s cup
Hath madly, darkly drunk—
Grief, Avarice, and Hate shall sleep
Within this very trunk !

“ This massy trunk that lies along,
And many more must fall—
For the very knave
Who digs the grave,
The man who spreads the pall,
And he who tolls the funeral bell,
The Elm shall have them all !

“ The tall abounding Elm that grows
In hedgerows up and down ;
In field and forest, copse and park,

And in the peopled town,
With colonies of noisy rooks
That nestle on its crown.

“ And well th’ abounding Elm may grow
In field and hedge so rife,
In forest, copse, and wooded park;
And ’mid the city’s strife,
For, every hour that passes by
Shall end a human life ! ”

The Phantom ends : the shade is gone ;
The sky is clear and bright ;
On turf, and moss, and fallen Tree,
There glows a ruddy light ;
And bounding through the golden fern
The Rabbit comes to bite.

The Thrush’s mate beside her sits
And pipes a merry lay ;
The Dove is in the evergreens ;
And on the Larch’s spray
The Fly-bird flutters up and down,
To catch its tiny prey.

The gentle Hind and dappled Fawn
Are coming up the glade ;
Each harmless furr’d and feather’d thing
Is glad, and not afraid—
But on my sadden’d spirit still
The Shadow leaves a shade.

A secret, vague, prophetic gloom,
As though by certain mark
I knew the fore-appointed Tree,
Within whose rugged bark
This warm and living frame shall find
Its narrow house and dark.

That mystic Tree which breathed to me
A sad and solemn sound,
That sometimes murmur'd overhead,
And sometimes underground;
Within that shady Avenue
Where lofty Elms abound.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

A ROMANCE.

"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old,
But something ails it now: the place is curst."

HART-LEAP WELL, BY WORDSWORTH.

PART I.

SOME dreams we have are nothing else but
dreams,

Unnatural and full of contradictions ;
Yet others of our most romantic schemes
Are something more than fictions.

It might be only on enchanted ground ;
It might be merely by a thought's expansion ;
But in the spirit, or the flesh, I found
An old deserted Mansion.

A residence for woman, child, and man,
A dwelling-place,—and yet no habitation ;
A House,—but under some prodigious ban
Of excommunication.

Unhinged the iron gates half open hung,
Jarr'd by the gusty gales of many winters,
That from its crumbled pedestal had flung
One marble globe in splinters.

No dog was at the threshold, great or small ;
No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
Not one domestic feature.

No human figure stirr'd, to go or come,
No face look'd forth from shut or open case-
ment;
No chimney smoked—there was no sign of Home
From parapet to basement.

With shatter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd ;
The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after ;
And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barr'd
With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear ;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the Dial.

But gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.

The wren had built within the Porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

The rabbit wild and gray, that flitted through
The shrubby clumps, and frisk'd, and sat, and
vanish'd,
But leisurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was banish'd.

The wary crow,—the pheasant from the woods—
Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,
Close to the Mansion, like domestic broods,
Fed with a "shocking tameness."

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted.

The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.

No sound was heard, except, from far away,
The ringing of the Whitwall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmur'd after.

But Echo never mock'd the human tongue ;
Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not par-
A secret curse on that old Building hung, [don,
And its deserted Garden.

The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool ;
No footstep mark'd the damp and mossy gravel,
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of human travel.

The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to
grapple ;
And on the canker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

But awfully the truant shunn'd the ground,
The vagrant kept aloof, and daring Poacher ;
In spite of gaps that through the fences round
Invited the encroacher.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

The pear and quince lay squander'd on the grass :
The mould was purple with unheeded showers
Of bloomy plums—a Wilderness it was
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers !

The marigold amidst the nettles blew,
The gourd embraced the rose-bush in its ramble,
The thistle and the stock together grew,
The hollyhock and bramble.

The bear-bine with the lilac interlaced,
The sturdy burdock choked its slender neighbour,
The spicy pink. All tokens were effaced
Of human care and labour.

The very yew Formality had train'd
To such a rigid pyramidal stature,
For want of trimming had almost regain'd
The raggedness of nature.

The Fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd bason.

The Statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves, and herbage rotten
Lay like the Idol of some bygone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.

On ev'ry side the aspect was the same,
All ruin'd, desolate, forlorn and savage :
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

PART II.

O, very gloomy is the House of Woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling !

O very, very dreary is the room
Where Love, domestic Love, no longer nestles,
But smitten by the common stroke of doom,
The Corpse lies on the trestles !

But House of Woe, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er look'd so gloomy as that Ghostly Hall,
With its deserted portal !

The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding-sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle.

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood,
The emmets of the steps had old possession,
And march'd in search of their diurnal food
In undisturb'd procession.

As undisturb'd as the prehensile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue,
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted.

Howbeit, the door I push'd—or so I dreamed—
Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creak-
ing
With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
That Time himself was speaking.

But Time was dumb within that Mansion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners.

Those tatter'd flags, that with the open'd door,
Seem'd the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor
Like dead leaves in December.

The startled bats flew out—bird after bird—
The screechowl overhead began to flutter,
And seem'd to mock the cry that she had
 heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echoed from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murder!

Meanwhile the rusty armour rattled round,
The banner shudder'd, and the ragged streamer
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.

The antlers, where the helmet hung and belt,
Stirr'd as the tempest stirs the forest branches,
Or as the stag had trembled when he felt
The bloodhound at his haunches.

The window jingled in its crumbled frame,
And thro' its many gaps of destitution
Dolorous moans and hollow sighings came,
Like those of dissolution.

The wood-louse dropp'd, and roll'd into a ball,
Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall
In universal panic.

The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turn'd, and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.

The very stains and fractures on the wall
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some Tragedy of that old Hall,
Lock'd up in hieroglyphic.

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the
doubt,
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid,
The banner of the BLOODY HAND shone out,
So ominously vivid.

Some key to man's inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver;
And ev'ry thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted;
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd, or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.

Huge drops roll'd down the walls, as if they
 wept;
And where the cricket used to chirp so shrilly,
The toad was squatting, and the lizard crept
On that damp hearth and chilly.

For years no cheerful blaze had sparkled there,
Or glanced on coat of buff or knightly metal;
The slug was crawling on the vacant chair,—
The snail upon the settle.

The floor was redolent of mould and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thicken'd.

No mark of leathern jack or metal cann,
No cup—no horn—no hospitable token,—
All social ties between that board and Man
Had long ago been broken.

There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a Presence so atrocious;
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

PART III.

'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, and damp, and cold,
With odours as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of rite, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault, or charnel.

Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding stress
Of ev'ry step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, fear'd to guess
How many feet ascended.

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.

The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or something in its shape—was winging ;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The Death's-Head moth was clinging.

That mystic moth, which, with a sense profound
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly ;
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely.

Such omens in the place there seem'd to be,
At ev'ry crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some Apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

Yet no portentous Shape the sight amazed ;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid ;
But from their tarnish'd frames dark Figures
 gazed,
And Faces spectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of Art's simulation ;
Their souls were looking thro' their painted eyes
With awful speculation.

On ev'ry lip a speechless horror dwelt ;
On ev'ry brow the burthen of affliction ;
The old Ancestral Spirits knew and felt
The House's malediction.

Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stirr'd, or sigh'd, or wept, or
 spoken ;
But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.

No other sound or stir of life was there,
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber.

Deserted rooms of luxury and state,
That old magnificence had richly furnish'd
With pictures, cabinets of ancient date,
And carvings gilt and burnish'd.

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art,
With scripture history, or classic fable ;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.

The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marr'd the tissue with a partial ravage ;
But undecaying frown'd upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.

The sky was pale ; the cloud a thing of doubt ;
Some hues were fresh, and some decay'd and
duller ;
But still the BLOODY HAND shone strangely out
With vehemence of colour !

The BLOODY HAND that with a lurid stain
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token,
Projected from the casement's painted pane,
Where all beside was broken.

The BLOODY HAND significant of crime,
That glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimson unimpair'd by time,
In such a wondrous manner !

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted !

The Death-Watch tick'd behind the panel'd oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that fill'd the soul with dread,
But thro' one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That Chamber is the Ghostly !

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.

The spider shunn'd the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banish'd,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanish'd.

One lonely ray that glanced upon a Bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To show the BLOODY HAND in burning red
Embroider'd on the curtain.

And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted ;
The floor alone retain'd the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement—
Oh what a tale they told of fear intense,
Of horror and amazement !

What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel dis-
tance ?

Had sought the door, the window, in his flight,
Striving for dear existence ?

What shrieking Spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?—
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly Shadow flitted.

Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veil'd the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

"Drown'd! drown'd!"—HAMLET.

ONE more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.—

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?

Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!

Oh ! it was pitiful !
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed :
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence ;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver ;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river :
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd—
Any where, any where
Out of the world !

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man !
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can !

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care ;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair !

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly,—
Smooth, and compose them ;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly !

Dreadfully staring
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,

Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behaviour,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour!

PART II.

Weary with troubles
That death must deliver,
Once more life bubbles
Away in the river.

* * * *

The moon in the river shone,
And the stars some six or seven,—
Poor child of sin, to throw it therein
Seemed sending it to Heaven.

* * * *

Cover her, cover her,
Throw the earth over her,—
Victim of murder inhumanly done;
With gravel and sod,
Hide, hide her from God,
And the light of the sun!

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

WITH fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch! stitch! stitch!
 In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
 She sang the “Song of the Shirt!”

“Work! work! work!
 While the cock is crowing aloof!
 And work—work—work,
 Till the stars shine through the roof!
 It’s Oh! to be a slave
 Along with the barbarous Turk,
 Where woman has never a soul to save,
 If this is Christian work!

“Work—work—work
 Till the brain begins to swim;
 Work—work—work
 Till the eyes are heavy and dim!

Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

“Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

“But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

“Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

“Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
 Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
 Band, and gusset, and seam,
 Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb’d,
 As well as the weary hand.

“Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
 And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
 The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
 And twit me with the spring.

“Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
 With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
 To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
 And the walk that costs a meal!

“Oh! but for one short hour!
 A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
 But only time for Grief!

A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

The following verse appears in the original MS. of the
"Song of the Shirt."

Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Work, work, work,
Like the engine that works by steam!
A mere machine of iron and wood,
That toils for Mammon's sake,
Without a brain to powder and craze,
Or a heart to feel—and break!

THE LADY'S DREAM.

THE lady lay in her bed,
 Her couch so warm and soft,
 But her sleep was restless and broken still;
 For turning often and oft
 From side to side, she mutter'd and moan'd,
 And toss'd her arms aloft.

At last she startled up,
 And gazed on the vacant air,
 With a look of awe, as if she saw
 Some dreadful phantom there—
 And then in the pillow she buried her face
 From visions ill to bear.

The very curtain shook,
 Her terror was so extreme;
 And the light that fell on the broider'd quilt,
 Kept a tremulous gleam;
 And her voice was hollow, and shook as she
 cried:—
 "Oh me! that awful dream!

“That weary, weary walk,
In the churchyard’s dismal ground!
And those horrible things, with shady wings,
That came and flitted round,—
Death, death, and nothing but death,
In every sight and sound!

“And oh! those maidens young,
Who wrought in that dreary room,
With figures drooping and spectres thin,
And cheeks without a bloom;— [pride,
And the Voice that cried, ‘For the pomp of
We haste to an early tomb!

“‘For the pomp and pleasure of Pride,
We toil like Afric slaves,
And only to earn a home at last,
Where yonder cypress waves;’—
And then they pointed—I never saw
A ground so full of graves!

“And still the coffins came,
With their sorrowful trains and slow;
Coffin after coffin still,
A sad and sickening show;
From grief exempt, I never had dreamt
Of such a World of Woe!

“Of the hearts that daily break,
Of the tears that hourly fall,

Of the many, many troubles of life,
That grieve this earthly ball—
Disease and Hunger, and Pain, and Want,
But now I dreamt of them all!

“For the blind and the cripple were there,
And the babe that pined for bread,
And the houseless man, and the widow poor
Who begged—to bury the dead;
The naked, alas, that I might have clad,
The famish'd I might have fed!

“The sorrow I might have soothed,
And the unregarded tears;
For many a thronging shape was there,
From long forgotten years,
Aye, even the poor rejected Moor,
Who rais'd my childish fears!

“Each pleading look, that long ago
I scann'd with a heedless eye,
Each face was gazing as plainly there,
As when I pass'd it by:
Woe, woe for me if the past should be
Thus present when I die!

“No need of sulphureous lake,
No need of fiery coal,
But only that crowd of human kind
Who wanted pity and dole—

In everlasting retrospect—
Will wring my sinful soul!

“Alas! I have walk'd through life
Too heedless where I trod;
Nay, helping to trample my fellow worm,
And fill the burial sod—
Forgetting that even the sparrow falls
Not unmark'd of God!

“I drank the richest draughts;
And ate whatever is good—
Fish, and flesh, and fowl, and fruit,
Supplied my hungry mood;
But I never remember'd the wretched ones
That starve for want of food!

“I dress'd as the noble dress,
In cloth of silver and gold,
With silk, and satin, and costly furs,
In many an ample fold;
But I never remember'd the naked limbs
That froze with winter's cold.

“The wounds I might have heal'd!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part:
But evil is wrought by want of Thought,
As well as want of Heart!”

She clasp'd her fervent hands,
And the tears began to stream ;
Large, and bitter, and fast they fell,
Remorse was so extreme ;
And yet, oh yet, that many a Dame
Would dream the Lady's Dream !

THE WORKHOUSE CLOCK.

AN ALLEGORY.

THERE'S a murmur in the air,
 A noise in every street—
 The murmur of many tongues,
 The noise of numerous feet—
 While round the Workhouse door
 The Labouring Classes flock,
 For why? the Overseer of the Poor
 Is setting the Workhouse Clock.

Who does not hear the tramp
 Of thousands speeding along
 Of either sex and various stamp,
 Sickly, crippled, or strong,
 Walking, limping, creeping
 From court, and alley, and lane,
 But all in one direction sweeping
 Like rivers that seek the main?
 Who does not see them sally
 From mill, and garret, and room,
 In lane, and court and alley,

From homes in poverty's lowest valley,
Furnished with shuttle and loom—
Poor slaves of Civilization's galley—
And in the road and footways rally,
As if for the Day of Doom?
Some, of hardly human form,
Stunted, crooked, and crippled by toil;
Dingy with smoke and dust and oil,
And smirch'd besides with vicious soil,
Clustering, mustering, all in a swarm.
Father, mother, and careful child,
Looking as if it had never smiled—
The Sempstress, lean, and weary, and wan,
With only the ghosts of garments on—
The Weaver, her sallow neighbour,
The grim and sooty Artisan;
Every soul—child, woman, or man,
Who lives—or dies—by labour.

Stirred by an overwhelming zeal,
And social impulse, a terrible throng!
Leaving shuttle, and needle, and wheel,
Furnace, and grindstone, spindle, and reel,
Thread, and yarn, and iron, and steel—
Yea, rest and the yet untasted meal—
Gushing, rushing, crushing along,
A very torrent of Man!
Urged by the sighs of sorrow and wrong,
Grown at last to a hurricane strong,
Stop its course who can!

Stop who can its onward course
And irresistible moral force ;
O ! vain and idle dream !
For surely as men are all akin,
Whether of fair or sable skin,
According to Nature's scheme,
That Human Movement contains within
A Blood-Power stronger than Steam.

Onward, onward, with hasty feet,
They swarm—and westward still—
Masses born to drink and eat,
But starving amidst Whitechapel's meat,
And famishing down Cornhill !
Through the Poultry—but still unfed—
Christian Charity, hang your head !
Hungry—passing the Street of Bread ;
Thirsty—the Street of Milk ;
Ragged—beside the Ludgate Mart,
So gorgeous, through Mechanic-Art,
With cotton, and wool, and silk !

At last, before that door
That bears so many a knock
Ere ever it opens to Sick or Poor,
Like sheep they huddle and flock—
And would that all the Good and Wise
Could see the Million of hollow eyes,
With a gleam derived from Hope and the skies,
Upturn'd to the Workhouse Clock !

Oh ! that the Parish Powers,
Who regulate Labour's hours,
The daily amount of human trial,
Weariness, pain, and self-denial,
Would turn from the artificial dial
That striketh ten or eleven,
And go, for once, by that older one
That stands in the light of Nature's sun
And takes its time from Heaven !

THE LAY OF THE LABOURER.

A SPADE! a rake! a hoe!
 A pickaxe, or a bill!
 A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
 A flail, or what ye will—
 And here's a ready hand
 To ply the needful tool,
 And skill'd enough, by lessons rough,
 In Labour's rugged school.

To hedge, or dig the ditch,
 To lop or fell the tree,
 To lay the swarth on the sultry field,
 Or plough the stubborn lea;
 The harvest stack to bind,
 The wheaten rick to thatch,
 And never fear in my pouch to find
 The tinder or the match.

To a flaming barn or farm
 My fancies never roam;
 The fire I yearn to kindle and burn
 Is on the hearth of Home;

Where children huddle and crouch
Through dark long winter days,
Where starving children huddle and crouch,
To see the cheerful rays,
A-glowing on the haggard cheek,
And not in the haggard's blaze !

To Him who sends a drought
To parch the fields forlorn,
The rain to flood the meadows with mud,
The blight to blast the corn,
To Him I leave to guide
The bolt in its crooked path,
To strike the miser's rick, and show
The skies blood-red with wrath.

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
A pickaxe, or a bill !
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
The corn to thrash, or the hedge to plash,
The market-team to drive,
Or mend the fence by the cover side,
And leave the game alive.

Aye, only give me work,
And then you need not fear
That I shall snare his worship's hare,
Or kill his grace's deer ;
Break into his lordship's house,

To steal the plate so rich ;
Or leave the yeoman that had a purse
To welter in a ditch.

Wherever Nature needs,
Wherever Labour calls,
No job I'll shirk of the hardest work,
To shun the workhouse walls ;
Where savage laws begrudge
The pauper babe its breath,
And doom a wife to a widow's life,
Before her partner's death.

My only claim is this,
With labour stiff and stark,
By lawful turn my living to earn,
Between the light and dark ;
My daily bread, and nightly bed,
My bacon, and drop of beer—
But all from the hand that holds the land,
And none from the overseer !

No parish money, or loaf,
No pauper badges for me,
A son of the soil, by right of toil
Entitled to my fee.
No alms I ask, give me my task :
Here are the arm, the leg,
The strength, the sinews of a Man,
To work, and not to beg.

Still one of Adam's heirs,
Though doom'd by chance of birth
To dress so mean, and to eat the lean,
Instead of the fat of the earth ;
To make such humble meals
As honest labour can,
A bone and a crust, with a grace to God,
And little thanks to man !

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
A pickaxe, or a bill !
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
Whatever the tool to ply,
Here is a willing drudge,
With muscle and limb, and woe to him
Who does their pay begrudge !

Who every weekly score
Docks labour's little mite,
Bestows on the poor at the temp'le door,
But robb'd them over night.
The very shilling he hoped to save,
As health and morals fail,
Shall visit me in the New Bastile,
'The Spital, or the Gaol !

THE LEE-SHORE.

SLEET ! and Hail ! and Thunder !
 And ye Winds that rave,
 Till the sands thereunder
 Tinge the sullen wave—

Winds, that like a Demon,
 Howl with horrid note
 Round the toiling Seaman,
 In his tossing boat—

From his humble dwelling,
 On the shingly shore,
 Where the billows swelling,
 Keep such hollow roar—

From that weeping Woman,
 Seeking with her cries
 Succour superhuman
 From the frowning skies—

From the Urchin pining
 For his Father's knee—
 From the lattice shining,
 Drive him out to sea !

Let broad leagues dissever
Him from yonder foam ;—
Oh, God ! to think Man ever
Comes too near his Home !

THE DEATH-BED.

WE watch'd her breathing thro' the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seem'd to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours.

LINES

ON SEEING MY WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN
SLEEPING IN THE SAME CHAMBER.

AND has the earth lost its so spacious round,
The sky its blue circumference above,
That in this little chamber there is found
Both earth and heaven—my universe of love!
All that my God can give me, or remove,
Here sleeping, save myself, in mimic death.
Sweet that in this small compass I behove
To live their living and to breathe their breath!
Almost I wish that, with one common sigh,
We might resign all mundane care and strife,
And seek together that transcendent sky,
Where Father, Mother, Children, Husband, Wife,
Together pant in everlasting life!

COBLENTZ, *Nov.* 1835.

TO MY DAUGHTER,
ON HER BIRTHDAY.

I.

DEAR Fanny ! nine long years ago,
While yet the morning sun was low,
And rosy with the eastern glow
The landscape smiled ;
Whilst low'd the newly-waken'd herds—
Sweet as the early song of birds,
I heard those first, delightful words,
“Thou hast a child !”

II.

Along with that uprising dew
Tears glisten'd in my eyes, though few,
To hail a dawning quite as new
To me, as Time :
It was not sorrow—not annoy—
But like a happy maid, though coy,
With grief-like welcome, even Joy
Forestalls its prime.

III.

So may'st thou live, dear ! many years,
In all the bliss that life endears,
Not without smiles, nor yet from tears,
 Too strictly kept :
When first thy infant littleness
I folded in my fond caress,
The greatest proof of happiness
 Was this—I wept.

Sept. 1839.

TO A CHILD

EMBRACING HIS MOTHER.

I.

LOVE thy mother, little one !
Kiss and clasp her neck again,—
Hereafter she may have a son
Will kiss and clasp her neck in vain.
Love thy mother, little one !

II.

Gaze upon her living eyes,
And mirror back her love for thee,—
Hereafter thou may'st shudder sighs
To meet them when they cannot see.
Gaze upon her living eyes !

III.

Press her lips the while they glow
With love that they have often told,—
Hereafter thou may'st press in woe,
And kiss them till thine own are cold.
Press her lips the while they glow !

IV.

Oh, revere her raven hair !
Altho' it be not silver-gray ;
Too early Death, led on by Care,
May snatch save one dear lock away.
Oh ! revere her raven hair !

V.

Pray for her at eve and morn,
That Heaven may long the stroke defer,—
For thou may'st live the hour forlorn
When thou wilt ask to die with her.
Pray for her at eve and morn !

STANZAS.

I.

FAREWELL Life! my senses swim,
And the world is growing dim:
Thronging shadows cloud the light,
Like the advent of the night—
Colder, colder, colder still,
Upward steals a vapour chill;
Strong the earthy odour grows—
I smell the mould above the rose!

II.

Welcome Life! the Spirit strives!
Strength returns and hope revives;
Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn
Fly like shadows at the morn,—
O'er the earth there comes a bloom;
Sunny light for sullen gloom,
Warm perfume for vapour cold—
I smell the rose above the mould!

April, 1845.

'TO A FALSE FRIEND.

I.

OUR hands have met, but not our hearts ;
Our hands will never meet again.
Friends, if we have ever been,
Friends we cannot now remain :
I only know I loved you once,
I only know I loved in vain ;
Our hands have met, but not our hearts :
Our hands will never meet again !

II.

Then farewell to heart and hand !
I would our hands had never met :
Even the outward form of love
Must be resign'd with some regret.
Friends, we still might seem to be,
If my wrong could e'er forget
Our hands have join'd but not our hearts :
I would our hands had never met !

THE POET'S PORTION.

WHAT is a mine—a treasury—a dower—
 A magic talisman of mighty power?
 A poet's wide possession of the earth.
 He has th' enjoyment of a flower's birth
 Before its budding—ere the first red streaks,—
 And Winter cannot rob him of their cheeks.
 Look—if his dawn be not as other men's !
 Twenty bright flushes—ere another kens
 The first of sunlight is abroad—he sees
 Its golden 'lection of the topmost trees,
 And opes the splendid fissures of the morn.
 When do his fruits delay, when doth his corn
 Linger for harvesting? Before the leaf
 Is commonly abroad, in his piled sheaf
 The flagging poppies lose their ancient flame.
 No sweet there is, no pleasure I can name,
 But he will sip it first—before the lees.
 'Tis his to taste rich honey,—ere the bees
 Are busy with the brooms. He may forestall
 June's rosy advent for his coronal ;
 Before th' expectant buds upon the bough,
 Twining his thoughts to bloom upon his brow.

Oh ! blest to see the flower in its seed,
Before its leafy presence ; for indeed
Leaves are but wings, on which the summer flies,
And each thing perishable fades and dies,
Escaped in thought ; but his rich thinkings be
Like overflows of immortality.
So that what there is steep'd shall perish never,
But live and bloom, and be a joy for ever.

SONG.

O LADY, leave thy silken thread
 And flowery tapestrie :
 There 's living roses on the bush,
 And blossoms on the tree ;
 Stoop where thou wilt, thy careless hand
 Some random bud will meet ;
 Thou canst not tread, but thou wilt find
 The daisy at thy feet.

'Tis like the birthday of the world,
 When earth was born in bloom ;
 The light is made of many dyes,
 The air is all perfume ;
 There 's crimson buds, and white and blue—
 The very rainbow showers
 Have turn'd to blossoms where they fell,
 And sown the earth with flowers.

There 's fairy tulips in the east,
 The garden of the sun ;
 The very streams reflect the hues,
 And blossom as they run :

While Morn opes like a crimson rose,
Still wet with pearly showers;
Then, lady, leave the silken thread
Thou twinest into flowers!

TIME, HOPE, AND MEMORY.

I HEARD a gentle maiden, in the spring,
 Set her sweet sighs to music, and thus sing :
 “ Fly through the world, and I will follow thee,
 Only for looks that may turn back on me ;

Only for roses that your chance may throw—
 Though wither'd—I will wear them on my
 brow,
 To be a thoughtful fragrance to my brain ;
 Warm'd with such love, that they will bloom
 again.

Thy love before thee, I must tread behind,
 Kissing thy foot-prints, though to me unkind ;
 But trust not all her fondness, though it seem,
 Lest thy true love should rest on a false dream.

Her face is smiling, and her voice is sweet ;
 But smiles betray, and music sings deceit ;
 And words speak false ;—yet, if they welcome
 prove,
 I'll be their echo, and repeat their love.

Only if waken'd to sad truth, at last,
The bitterness to come, and sweetness past;
When thou art vex'd, then, turn again, and see
Thou hast loved Hope, but Memory loved
thee."

FLOWERS.

I WILL not have the mad Clytie,
 Whose head is turn'd by the sun ;
 The tulip is a courtly quean,
 Whom, therefore I will shun ;
 The cowslip is a country wench,
 The violet is a nun ;—
 But I will woo the dainty rose,
 The queen of every one.

The pea is but a wanton witch,
 In too much haste to wed,
 And clasps her rings on every hand ;
 The wolfsbane I should dread ;—
 Nor will I dreary rosemarye,
 That always mourns the dead ;—
 But I will woo the dainty rose,
 With her cheeks of tender red.

The lily is all in white, like a saint,
 And so is no mate for me—
 And the daisy's cheek is tipp'd with a blush,
 She is of such low degree ;

Jasmine is sweet, and has many loves,
And the broom's betroth'd to the bee;—
But I will plight with the dainty rose,
For fairest of all is she.

TO MY WIFE.

STILL glides the gentle streamlet on,
With shifting current new and strange ;
The water that was here is gone,
But those green shadows never change.

Serene or ruffled by the storm,
On present waves, as on the past
The mirror'd grove retains its form,
The self-same trees their semblance cast.

The hue each fleeting globule wears,
That drop bequeaths it to the next ;
One picture still the surface bears,
To illustrate the murmur'd text.

So, love, however time may flow,
Fresh hours pursuing those that flee,
One constant image still shall show
My tide of life is true to thee.

LINES.

LET us make a leap, my dear,
In our love, of many a year,
And date it very far away,
On a bright clear summer day,
When the heart was like a sun
To itself, and falsehood none ;
And the rosy lips a part
Of the very loving heart,
And the shining of the eye
But a sign to know it by ;—
When my faults were all forgiven,
And my life deserved of Heaven.
Dearest, let us reckon so,
And love for all that long ago ;
Each absence count a year complete,
And keep a birthday when we meet.

I LOVE THEE.

I LOVE thee—I love thee!
 'Tis all that I can say;—
 It is my vision in the night,
 My dreaming in the day;
 The very echo of my heart,
 The blessing when I pray:
 I love thee—I love thee!
 Is all that I can say.

I love thee—I love thee!
 Is ever on my tongue;
 In all my proudest poesy
 That chorus still is sung;
 It is the verdict of my eyes,
 Amidst the gay and young:
 I love thee—I love thee!
 A thousand maids among.

I love thee—I love thee!
 Thy bright and hazel glance,
 The mellow lute upon those lips,
 Whose tender tones entrance;

But most, dear heart of hearts, thy proofs
That still these words enhance,
I love thee—I love thee!
Whatever be thy chance.

TO JANE.

I.

WELCOME, dear Heart, and a most kind good-
 morrow ;
 The day is gloomy, but our looks shall shine:—
 Flowers I have none to give thee, but I borrow
 Their sweetness in a verse to speak for thine.

II.

Here are red Roses, gather'd at thy cheeks,
 The white were all too happy to look white :
 For love the Rose, for faith the Lily speaks ;
 It withers in false hands, but here 'tis bright !

III.

Dost love sweet Hyacinth ? Its scented leaf
 Curles manifold,—all love's delights blow double :
 'Tis said this flow'ret is inscribed with grief,—
 But let that hint of a forgotten trouble.

IV.

I pluck'd the Primrose at night's dewy noon ;
 Like Hope, it show'd its blossoms in the night ;—

'Twas, like Endymion, watching for the Moon!
And here are Sunflowers, amorous of light!

V.

These golden Buttercups are April's seal,—
The Daisy-stars her constellations be :
These grew so lowly, I was forced to kneel,
Therefore I pluck no Daisies but for thee !

VI.

Here 's Daisies for the morn, Primrose for gloom,
Pansies and Roses for the noontide hours :—
A wight once made a dial of their bloom,—
So may thy life be measured out by flowers !

TO ———.

COMPOSED AT ROTTERDAM.

I GAZE upon a city,—
 A city new and strange,
 Down many a watery vista
 My fancy takes a range;
 From side to side I saunter,
 And wonder where I am;
 And can *you* be in England,
 And *I* at Rotterdam!

Before me lie dark waters
 In broad canals and deep,
 Whereon the silver moonbeams
 Sleep, restless in their sleep;
 A sort of vulgar Venice
 Reminds me where I am;
 Yes, yes, you are in England,
 And I'm at Rotterdam.

Tall houses with quaint gables,
 Where frequent windows shine,

And quays that lead to bridges
And trees in formal line,
And masts of spicy vessels
From western Surinam,
All tell me you're in England.
But I'm in Rotterdam.

Those sailors, how outlandish
The face and form of each !
They deal in foreign gestures,
And use a foreign speech ;
A tongue not learn'd near Isis,
Or studied by the Cam,
Declares that you're in England,
And I'm at Rotterdam.

And now across a market
My doubtful way I trace,
Where stands a solemn statue,
The Genius of the place ;
And to the great Erasmus
I offer my salaam ;
Who tells me you're in England,
But I'm at Rotterdam.

The coffee-room is open—
I mingle in its crowd,—
The dominos are noisy—
The hookahs raise a cloud ;
The flavour now of Fearon's,

That mingles with my dram,
Reminds me you're in England,
And I'm at Rotterdam.

Then here it goes, a bumper—
The toast it shall be mine,
In schiedam, or in sherry,
Tokay, or hock of Rhine ;
It well deserves the brightest,
Where sunbeam ever swam—
“The Girl I love in England”
I drink at Rotterdam !

March, 1885

SERENADE.

I.

Ah, sweet, thou little knowest how
 I wake and passionate watches keep ;
 And yet, while I address thee now,
 Methinks thou smilest in thy sleep.
 'Tis sweet enough to make me weep,
 That tender thought of love and thee,
 That while the world is hush'd so deep,
 Thy soul's perhaps awake to me !

II.

Sleep on, sleep on, sweet bride of sleep !
 With golden visions for thy dower,
 While I this midnight vigil keep,
 And bless thee in thy silent bower ;
 To me 'tis sweeter than the power
 Of sleep, and fairy dreams unfurl'd,
 That I alone, at this still hour,
 In patient love outwatch the world.

VERSES IN AN ALBUM.

I.

FAR above the hollow
Tempest, and its moan,
Singeth bright Apollo
In his golden zone,—
Cloud doth never shade him,
Nor a storm invade him,
On his joyous throne.

II.

So when I behold me
In an orb as bright,
How thy soul doth fold me
In its throne of light!
Sorrow never paineth,
Nor a care attaineth,
To that blessed height.

BALLAD

It was not in the winter
 Our loving lot was cast;
 It was the time of roses,—
 We pluck'd them as we pass'd!

That churlish season never frown'd
 On early lovers yet!
 Oh, no—the world was newly crown'd
 With flowers when first we met.

'Twas twilight, and I bade you go,
 But still you held me fast;
 It was the time of roses,—
 We pluck'd them as we pass'd!

What else could peer thy glowing cheek,
 That tears began to stud?
 And when I asked the like of Love,
 You snatch'd a damask bud;

And oped it to the dainty core,
 Still glowing to the last.
 It was the time of roses,—
 We pluck'd them as we pass'd.

BALLAD.

I.

SPRING it is cheery,
 Winter is dreary,
 Green leaves hang, but the brown must fly ;
 When he's forsaken,
 Wither'd and shaken,
 What can an old man do but die ?

II.

Love will not clip him,
 Maids will not lip him,
 Maud and Marian pass him by ;
 Youth it is sunny,
 Age has no honey,—
 What can an old man do but die ?

III.

June it was jolly,
 O for its folly !
 A dancing leg and a laughing eye ;
 Youth may be silly,
 Wisdom is chilly,—
 What can an old man do but die ?

IV.

Friends they are scanty,
Beggars are plenty,
If he has followers, I know why ;
Gold 's in his clutches,
(Buying him crutches !)—
What can an old man do but die ?

BALLAD.

SHE 's up and gone, the graceless Girl!
 And robb'd my failing years;
 My blood before was thin and cold
 But now 'tis turn'd to tears;—
 My shadow falls upon my grave,
 So near the brink I stand,
 She might have staid a little yet,
 And led me by the hand!

Aye, call her on the barren moor,
 And call her on the hill,
 'Tis nothing but the heron's cry,
 And plover's answer shrill;
 My child is flown on wilder wings,
 Than they have ever spread,
 And I may even walk a waste
 That widen'd when she fled.

Full many a thankless child has been,
 But never one like mine;
 Her meat was served on plates of gold,
 Her drink was rosy wine;

But now she'll share the robin's food,
And sup the common rill,
Before her feet will turn again
To meet her father's will!

BALLAD.

SIGH on sad heart, for Love's eclipse
 And Beauty's fairest queen,
 Tho' 'tis not for my peasant lips
 To soil her name between:
 A king might lay his sceptre down,
 But I am poor and nought,
 The brow should wear a golden crown
 That wears her in its thought.

The diamonds glancing in her hair,
 Whose sudden beams surprise,
 Might bid such humble hopes beware
 The glancing of her eyes;
 Yet looking once, I look'd too long,
 And if my love is sin,
 Death follows on the heels of wrong,
 And kills the crime within.

Her dress seem'd wove of lily leaves,
 It was so pure and fine,
 O lofty wears, and lowly weaves,
 But hoddan gray is mine;

And homely hose must step apart,
Where garter'd princes stand,
But may he wear my love at heart
That wins her lily hand!

Alas! there's far from russet frieze
To silks and satin gowns,
But I doubt if God made like degrees,
In courtly hearts and clowns.
My father wrong'd a maiden's mirth,
And brought her cheeks to blame,
And all that's lordly of my birth,
Is my reproach and shame!

'Tis vain to weep,—'tis vain to sigh,
'Tis vain this idle speech,
For where her happy pearls do lie,
My tears may never reach;
Yet when I'm gone, e'en lofty pride
May say of what has been,
His love was nobly born and died,
Tho' all the rest was mean!

My speech is rude,—but speech is weak
Such love as mine to tell,
Yet had I words, I dare not speak,
So, Lady, fare thee well;
I will not wish thy better state
Was one of low degree,
But I must weep that partial fate
Made such a churl of me.

THE ROMANCE OF COLOGNE

'Tis even—on the pleasant banks of Rhine
 The thrush is singing and the dove is cooing;
 A Youth and Maiden on the turf recline
 Alone—and he is wooing.

Yet woos in vain, for to the voice of love
 No kindly sympathy the Maid discovers,
 Though round them both, and in the air above,
 The tender spirit hovers.

Untouch'd by lovely Nature and her laws,
 The more he pleads, more coyly she represses;
 Her lips denies, and now her hand withdraws,
 Rejecting his caresses.

Fair is she as the dreams young poets weave,
 Bright eyes and dainty lips and tresses curly,
 In outward loveliness a child of Eve,
 But cold as nymph of Lurley.

The more Love tries her pity to engross,
 The more she chills him with a strange behaviour;

Now tells her beads, now gazes on the Cross
And image of the Saviour.

Forth goes the lover with a farewell moan,
As from the presence of a thing inhuman ;—
Oh, what unholy spell hath turn'd to stone
The young warm heart of woman !

* * * *

'Tis midnight—and the moonbeam, cold and wan,
On bower and river quietly is sleeping,
And o'er the corse of a self-murder'd man
The Maiden fair is weeping.

In vain she looks into his glassy eyes,
No pressure answers to her hands so pressing ;
In her fond arms impassively he lies,
Clay-cold to her caressing.

Despairing, stunn'd, by her eternal loss,
She flies to succour that may best beseem her
But, lo ! a frowning figure veils the Cross
And hides the blest Redeemer !

With stern right hand it stretches forth a scroll,
Wherein she reads, in melancholy letters,
The cruel, fatal pact that placed her soul
And her young heart in fetters.

“Wretch ! sinner ! renegade ! to truth and God,
Thy holy faith for human love to barter !”

No more she hears, but on the bloody sod
Sinks, Bigotry's last martyr!

And side by side the hapless Lovers lie;
Tell me, harsh priest! by yonder tragic token,
What part hath God in such a bond, whereby
Or hearts or vows are broken?

THE KEY,

A MOORISH ROMANCE.

"On the east coast, towards Tunis, the Moors still preserve the keys of their ancestors' houses in Spain; to which country they still express the hopes of one day returning, and again planting the crescent on the ancient walls of the Alhambra." SCOTT'S TRAVELS IN MOROCCO AND ALGIERS.

"Is Spain cloven in such a manner as to want closing?"—
SANCHO PANZA.

THE Moor leans on his cushion,
With the pipe between his lips;
And still at frequent intervals
The sweet sherbét he sips;
But, spite of lulling vapour
And the sober cooling cup,
The spirit of the swarthy Moor
Is fiercely kindling up!

One hand is on his pistol,
On its ornamented stock,
While his finger feels the trigger
And is busy with the lock—
The other seeks his ataghan,

And clasps its jewell'd hilt—
Oh! much of gore in days of yore
That crooked blade has spilt!

His brows are knit, his eyes of jet
In vivid blackness roll,
And gleam with fatal flashes
Like the fire-damp of the coal;
His jaws are set, and through his teeth
He draws a savage breath,
As if about to raise the shout
Of Victory or Death!

For why? the last Zebeck that came
And moor'd within the Mole,
Such tidings unto Tunis brought
As stir his very soul—
The cruel jar of civil war,
The sad and stormy reign,
That blackens like a thundercloud
The sunny land of Spain!

No strife of glorious Chivalry,
For honour's gain or loss,
Nor yet that ancient rivalry,
The Crescent with the Cross.
No charge of gallant Paladins
On Moslems stern and stanch;
But Christians shedding Christian blood
Beneath the olive's branch!

A war of horrid parricide,
And brother killing brother ;
Yea, like to " dogs and sons of dogs "
That worry one another.
But let them bite and tear and fight,
The more the Kaffers slay,
The sooner Hagar's swarming sons
Shall make the land a prey !

The sooner shall the Moor behold
Th' Alhambra's pile again ;
And those who pined in Barbary
Shall shout for joy in Spain—
The sooner shall the Crescent wave
On dear Granada's walls ;
And proud Mohamimed Ali sit
Within his father's halls !

" Alla-il-alla ! " tiger-like
Up springs the swarthy Moor,
And, with a wide and hasty stride,
Steps o'er the marble floor ;
Across the hall, till from the wall,
Where such quaint patterns be,
With eager hand he snatches down
An old and massive Key !

A massive Key of curious shape,
And dark with dirt and rust,
And well three weary centuries

The metal might incrust !
For since the King Boabdil fell
Before the native stock,
That ancient Key, so quaint to see,
Hath never been in lock.

Brought over by the Saracens
Who fled across the main,
A token of the secret hope
Of going back again ;
From race to race, from hand to hand,
From house to house it pass'd ;
O will it ever, ever ope
The Palace gate at last ?

Three hundred years and fifty-two
On post and wall it hung—
Three hundred years and fifty-two
A dream to old and young ;
But now a brighter destiny
The Prophet's will accords :
The time is come to scour the rust,
And lubricate the wards.

For should the Moor with sword and lance
At Algesiras land,
Where is the bold Bernardo now
Their progress to withstand ?
To Burgos should the Moslem come,
Where is the noble Cid

Five royal crowns to topple down
As gallant Diaz did ?

Hath Xeres any Pounder now,
When other weapons fail,
With club to thrash invaders rash,
Like barley with a flail ?
Hath Seville any Perez still,
To lay his clusters low,
And ride with seven turbans green
Around his saddle-bow ?

No ! never more shall Europe see
Such Heroes brave and bold,
Such Valour, Faith, and Loyalty,
As used to shine of old !
No longer to one battle cry
United Spaniards run,
And with their thronging spears uphold
The Virgin and her Son !

From Cadiz Bay to rough Biscay
Internal discord dwells,
And Barcelona bears the scars
Of Spanish shot and shells.
The fleets decline, the merchants pine
For want of foreign trade ;
And gold is scant ; and Alicante
Is seal'd by strict blockade !

The loyal fly, and Valour falls,
Opposed by court intrigue ;
But treachery and traitors thrive,
Upheld by foreign league ;
While factions seeking private ends
By turns usurping reign—
Well may the dreaming, scheming Moor
Exulting point to Spain !

Well may he cleanse the rusty Key
With Afric sand and oil,
And hope an Andalusian home
Shall recompense the toil !
Well may he swear the Moorish spear
Through wild Castile shall sweep,
And where the Catalonian sow'd
The Saracen shall reap !

Well may he vow to spurn the Cross
Beneath the Arab hoof,
And plant the Crescent yet again
Above th' Alhambra's roof
When those from whom St. Jago's name
In chorus once arose,
Are shouting Faction's battle-cries,
And Spain forgets to " Close ! "

Well may he swear his ataghan
Shall rout the traitor swarm,
And carve them into Arabesques

That show no human form—
The blame be theirs whose bloody feuds
Invite the savage Moor,
And tempt him with the ancient Key
To seek the ancient door!

FAIR INES.

I.

O SAW ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest:
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

II.

O turn again, fair Ines,
Before the fall of night,
For fear the Moon should shine alone,
And stars unrivall'd bright;
And blessed will the lover be
That walks beneath their light,
And breathes the love against thy cheek
I dare not even write!

III.

Would I had been, fair Ines,
That gallant cavalier,
Who rode so gayly by thy side,
And whisper'd thee so near!——
Were there no bonny dames at home,
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear?

IV.

I saw thee, lovely Ines,
Descend along the shore,
With bands of noble gentlemen,
And banners waved before;
And gentle youth and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore;—
It would have been a beauteous dream,
—If it had been no more!

V.

Alas, alas, fair Ines,
She went away with song,
With Music waiting on her steps,
And shoutings of the throng;
But some were sad, and felt no mirth,
But only Music's wrong,
In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell,
To her you've loved so long.

VI.

Farewell, farewell, fair Ines,
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before,—
Alas for pleasure on the sea,
And sorrow on the shore !
The smile that blest one lover's heart
Has broken many more !

THE DEPARTURE OF SUMMER

SUMMER is gone on swallows' wings,
 And earth has buried all her flowers :
 No more the lark, the linnet sings,
 But Silence sits in faded bowers.
 There is a shadow on the plain
 Of Winter ere he comes again,—
 There is in woods a solemn sound
 Of hollow warnings whisper'd round,
 As Echo in her deep recess
 For once had turn'd a prophetess.
 Shuddering Autumn stops to list,
 And breathes his fear in sudden sighs,
 With clouded face, and hazel eyes
 That quench themselves, and hide in mist.

Yes, Summer's gone like pageant bright ;
 Its glorious days of golden light
 Are gone—the mimic suns that quiver,
 Then melt in Time's dark-flowing river.
 Gone the sweetly-scented breeze
 That spoke in music to the trees ;
 Gone for damp and chilly breath,
 As if fresh blown o'er marble seas,

Or newly from the lungs of Death.—
Gone its virgin roses' blushes,
Warm as when Aurora rushes
Freshly from the god's embrace,
With all her shame upon her face.
Old Time hath laid them in the mould;
Sure he is blind as well as old,
Whose hand relentless never spares
Young cheeks so beauty-bright as theirs!
Gone are the flame-eyed lovers now
From where so blushing-blest they tarried
Under the hawthorn's blossom-bough,
Gone; for Day and Night are married.
All the light of love is fled :—
Alas ! that negro breasts should hide
The lips that were so rosy red,
At morning and at even-tide !

Delightful Summer ! then adieu
Till thou shalt visit us anew :
But who without regretful sigh
Can say, adieu, and see thee fly ?
Not he that e'er hath felt thy pow'r,
His joy expanding like a flow'r
That cometh after rain and snow,
Looks up at heaven, and learns to glow :—
Not he that fled from Babel-strife
To the green sabbath-land of life,
To dodge dull Care 'mid cluster'd trees,
And cool his forehead in the breeze,—

Whose spirit, weary-worn perchance,
Shook from its wings a weight of grief,
And perch'd upon an aspen leaf,
For every breath to make it dance.

Farewell!—on wings of sombre stain,
That blacken in the last blue skies,
Thou fly'st; but thou wilt come again
On the gay wings of butterflies.
Spring at thy approach will sprout
Her new Corinthian beauties out,
Leaf-woven homes, where twitter-words
Will grow to songs, and eggs to birds;
Ambitious buds shall swell to flowers,
And April smiles to sunny hours.
Bright days shall be, and gentle nights
Full of soft breath and echo-lights,
As if the god of sun-time kept
His eyes half-open while he slept.
Roses shall be where roses were,
Not shadows, but reality;
As if they never perish'd there,
But slept in immortality:
Nature shall thrill with new delight,
And Time's relumined river run
Warm as young blood, and dazzling bright,
As if its source were in the sun!

But say, hath Winter then no charms?
Is there no joy, no gladness warms

His aged heart ? no happy wiles
To cheat the hoary one to smiles ?
Onward he comes—the cruel North
Pours his furious whirlwind forth
Before him—and we breathe the breath
Of famish'd bears that howl to death.
Onward he comes from rocks that blanch
O'er solid streams that never flow
His tears all ice, his locks all snow,
Just crept from some huge avalanche—
A thing half-breathing and half-warm,
As if one spark began to glow
Within some statue's marble form,
Or pilgrim stiffen'd in the storm.
Oh ! will not Mirth's light arrows fail
To pierce that frozen coat of mail ?
Oh ! will not joy but strive in vain
To light up those glazed eyes again ?

No ! take him in, and blaze the oak,
And pour the wine, and warm the ale ;
His sides shall shake to many a joke,
His tongue shall thaw in many a tale,
His eyes grow bright, his heart be gay,
And even his palsy charm'd away.
What heeds he then the boisterous shout
Of angry winds that scold without,
Like shrewish wives at tavern door ?
What heeds he then the wild uproar
Of billows bursting on the shore ?

In dashing waves, in howling breeze,
There is a music that can charm him ;
When safe, and shelter'd, and at ease,
He hears the storm that cannot harm him.

But hark ! those shouts ! that sudden din
Of little hearts that laugh within.
Oh ! take him where the youngsters play,
And he will grow as young as they !
They come ! they come ! each blue-eyed Sport,
The Twelfth-Night King and all his court—
'Tis Mirth fresh crown'd with mistletoe !
Music with her merry fiddles,
Joy "on light fantastic toe,"
Wit with all his jests and riddles,
Singing and dancing as they go.
And Love, young Love, among the rest,
A welcome—nor unbidden guest.

But still for Summer dost thou grieve?
Then read our Poets—they shall weave
A garden of green fancies still,
Where thy wish may rove at will.
They have kept for after treats
The essences of summer sweets,
And echoes of its songs that wind
In endless music through the mind :
They have stamp'd in visible traces
The "thoughts that breathe," in words that shine—
The flights of soul in sunny places—

To greet and company with thine.
These shall wing thee on to flow'rs—
The past or future, that shall seem
All the brighter in thy dream
For blowing in such desert hours.
The summer never shines so bright
As thought of in a winter's night;
And the sweetest loveliest rose
Is in the bud before it blows;
Thé dear one of the lover's heart
Is painted to his longing eyes,
In charms she ne'er can realize—
But when she turns again to part.
Dream thou then, and bind thy brow
With wreath of fancy roses now,
And drink of Summer in the cup
Where the Muse hath mix'd it up;
The "dance, and song, and sun-burnt mirth,"
With the warm nectar of the earth:
Drink! 'twill glow in every vein,
And thou shalt dream the winter through:
Then waken to the sun again,
And find thy Summer Vision true!

ODE:

AUTUMN.

I.

I SAW old Autumn in the misty morn
 Stand shadowless like silence, listening
 To silence, for no lonely bird would sing
 Into his hollow ear from woods forlorn,
 Nor lowly hedge nor solitary thorn ;—
 Shaking his languid locks all dewy bright
 With tangled gossamer that fell by night,
 Pearling his coronet of golden corn.

II.

Where are the songs of Summer ?—With the sun,
 Oping the dusky eyelids of the south,
 Till shade and silence waken up as one,
 And Morning sings with a warm odorous mouth.
 Where are the merry birds ?—Away, away,
 On panting wings through the inclement skies,
 Lest owls should prey
 Undazzled at noon-day,
 And tear with horny beak their lustrous eyes.

III.

Where are the blooms of Summer?—In the west,
Blushing their last to the last sunny hours,
When the mild Eve by sudden Night is prest
Like tearful Proserpine, snatch'd from her flow'rs
 To a most gloomy breast.

Where is the pride of Summer,—the green
 prime,—

The many, many leaves all twinkling?—Three
On the moss'd elm; three on the naked lime
Trembling,—and one upon the old oak tree!

Where is the Dryad's immortality?—
Gone into mournful cypress and dark yew,
Or wearing the long gloomy Winter through
 In the smooth holly's green eternity.

IV.

The squirrel gloats on his accomplish'd hoard,
The ants have brimm'd their garners with ripe
 grain,

And honey bees have stored
The sweets of Summer in their luscious cells;
The swallows all have wing'd across the main;
But here the Autumn melancholy dwells,
 And sighs her tearful spells

Amongst the sunless shadows of the plain.

Alone, alone,

Upon a mossy stone,

She sits and reckons up the dead and gone

With the last leaves for a love-rosary,
Whilst all the wither'd world looks drearily,
Like a dim picture of the drowned past
In the hush'd mind's mysterious far away,
Doubtful what ghostly thing will steal the last
Into that distance, gray upon the gray.

V.

O go and sit with her, and be o'ershaded
Under the languid downfall of her hair :
She wears a coronal of flowers faded
Upon her forehead, and a face of care ;—
There is enough of wither'd everywhere .
To make her bower,—and enough of gloom ;
There is enough of sadness to invite,
If only for the rose that died,—whose doom
Is Beauty's,—she that with the living bloom
Of conscious cheeks most beautifies the light ;—
There is enough of sorrowing, and quite
Enough of bitter fruits the earth doth bear,—
Enough of chilly droppings for her bowl ;
Enough of fear and shadowy despair,
To frame her cloudy prison for the soul !

AUTUMN.

I.

THE Autumn skies are flush'd with gold,
And fair and bright the rivers run ;
These are but streams of winter cold,
And painted mists that quench the sun.

II.

In secret boughs no sweet birds sing,
In secret boughs no bird can shroud ;
These are but leaves that take to wing,
And wintry winds that pipe so loud.

III.

'Tis not trees' shade, but cloudy glooms
That on the cheerless valleys fall,
The flowers are in their grassy tombs,
And tears of dew are on them all.

AUTUMN.

THE Autumn is old,
The sere leaves are flying ;—
He hath gather'd up gold,
And now he is dying ;—
Old age, bēgin sighing !

The vintage is ripe,
The harvest is heaping ;—
But some that have sow'd
Have no riches for reaping ;—
Poor wretch, fall a weeping !

The year's in the wane,
There is nothing adorning,
The night has no eve,
And the day has no morning ;—
Cold winter gives warning.

The rivers run chill,
The red sun is sinking,
And I am grown old,
And life is fast shrinking ;—
Here's enow for sad thinking !

SONG.

FOR MUSIC.

I.

A LAKE and a fairy boat
To sail in the moonlight clear,—
And merrily we would float
From the dragons that watch us here !

II.

Thy gown should be snow-white silk,
And strings of orient pearls,
Like gossamers dipp'd in milk,
Should twine with thy raven curls !

III.

Red rubies should deck thy hands,
And diamonds should be thy dow'r—
But Fairies have broke their wands,
And wishing has lost its pow'r !

SONG.

I.

THE stars are with the voyager
Wherever he may sail ;
The moon is constant to her time ;
The sun will never fail ;
But follow, follow round the world,
The green earth and the sea ;
So love is with the lover's heart,
Wherever he may be.

II.

Wherever he may be, the stars
Must daily lose their light ;
The moon will veil her in the shade ;
The sun will set at night.
The sun may set, but constant love
Will shine when he's away ;
So that dull night is never night,
And day is brighter day.

HYMN TO THE SUN.

I.

GIVER of glowing light !
 Though but a god of other days,
 The kings and sages
 Of wiser ages
 Still live and gladden in thy genial rays.

II.

King of the tuneful lyre.
 Still poets' hymns to thee belong ;
 Though lips are cold
 Whereon of old
 Thy beams all turn'd to worshipping and song !

III.

Lord of the dreadful bow,
 None triumph now for Python's death ;
 But thou dost save
 From hungry grave
 The life that hangs upon a summer breath.

IV.

Father of rosy day,
No more thy clouds of incense rise ;
 But waking flow'rs
 At morning hours,
Give out their sweets to meet thee in the skies.

V.

God of the Delphic fane,
No more thou listenest to hymns sublime ;
 But they will leave
 On winds at eve,
A solemn echo to the end of time.

TO A COLD BEAUTY.

I.

LADY, wouldst thou heiress be
 To Winter's cold and cruel part?
 When he sets the rivers free,
 Thou dost still lock up thy heart;—
 Thou that shouldst outlast the snow,
 But in the whiteness of thy brow?

II.

Scorn and cold neglect are made
 For winter gloom and winter wind,
 But thou wilt wrong the summer air,
 Breathing it to words unkind,—
 Breath which only should belong
 To love, to sunlight, and to song!

III.

When the little buds uncloze,
 Red, and white, and pied, and blue,
 And that virgin flow'r, the rose,
 Opes her heart to hold the dew,

Wilt thou lock thy bosom up
With no jewel in its cup?

IV.

Let not cold December sit
Thus in Love's peculiar throne;—
Brooklets are not prison'd now,
But crystal frosts are all agone,
And that which hangs upon the spray,
It is no snow, but flower of May!

RUTH.

SHE stood breast high amid the corn,
 Clasp'd by the golden light of morn,
 Like the sweetheart of the sun,
 Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,
 Deeply ripen'd ;—such a blush
 In the midst of brown was born,
 Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
 Which were blackest none could tell,
 But long lashes veil'd a light,
 That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
 Made her tressy forehead dim ;—
 Thus she stood amid the stooks,
 Praising God with sweetest looks :—

Sure, I said, heav'n did not mean,
 Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,
 Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
 Share my harvest and my home.

THE SEA OF DEATH.

A FRAGMENT.

———— Methought I saw
 Life swiftly treading over endless space ;
 And, at her foot-print, but a bygone pace,
 The ocean-past, which, with increasing wave,
 Swallow'd her steps like a pursuing grave.

Sad were my thoughts that anchor'd silently
 On the dead waters of that passionless sea,
 Unstirr'd by any touch of living breath :
 Silence hung over it, and drowsy Death,
 Like a gorged sea-bird, slept with folded wings
 On crowded carcasses—sad passive things
 That wore the thin gray surface, like a veil
 Over the calmness of their features pale.

And there were spring-faced cherubs that did sleep
 Like water-lilies on that motionless deep,
 How beautiful ! with bright unruffled hair
 On sleek unfretted brows, and eyes that were
 Buried in marble tombs, a pale eclipse !

And smile-bedimpled cheeks, and pleasant lips,
Meekly apart, as if the soul intense
Spake out in dreams of its own innocence:
And so they lay in loveliness, and kept
The birth-night of their peace, that Life e'en wept
With very envy of their happy fronts;
For there were neighbour brows scarr'd by the
 brunts

Of strife and sorrowing—where Care had set
His crooked autograph, and marr'd the jet
Of glossy locks, with hollow eyes forlorn,
And lips that curl'd in bitterness and scorn—
Wretched,—as they had breathed of this world's
 pain,

And so bequeath'd it to the world again
Through the beholder's heart in heavy sighs.
So lay they garmented in torpid light,
Under the pall of a transparent night,
Like solemn apparitions lull'd sublime
To everlasting rest,—and with them Time
Slept, as he sleeps upon the silent face
Of a dark dial in a sunless place.

I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER.

I REMEMBER, I remember,
 The house where I was born,
 The little window where the sun
 Came peeping in at morn;
 He never came a wink too soon,
 Nor brought too long a day,
 But now, I often wish the night
 Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember,
 The roses, red and white,
 The violets, and the lily-cups,
 Those flowers made of light!
 The lilacs where the robin built,
 And where my brother set
 The laburnum on his birth-day,—
 The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember
 Where I was used to swing,
 And thought the air must rush as fresh
 To swallows on the wing;

My spirit flew in feathers then,
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow !

I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high ;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky :
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I 'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy.

THE WATER LADY.

I.

ALAS, the moon should ever beam
To show what man should never see !—
I saw a maiden on a stream,
And fair was she !

II.

I staid awhile, to see her throw
Her tresses back, that all beset
The fair horizon of her brow
With clouds of jet.

III.

I staid a little while to view
Her cheek, that wore in place of red
The bloom of water, tender blue,
Daintily spread.

IV.

I staid to watch, a little space,
Her parted lips if she would sing ;
The waters closed above her face
With many a ring.

V.

And still I staid a little more,
Alas ! she never comes again !
I throw my flowers from the shore,
And watch in vain.

VI.

I know my life will fade away,
I know that I must vainly pine,
For I am made of mortal clay,
But she's divine !

THE EXILE.

THE swallow with summer
 Will wing o'er the seas,
 The wind that I sigh to
 Will visit thy trees,
 The ship that it hastens
 Thy ports will contain,
 But me—I must never
 See England again !

There's many that weep there,
 But one weeps alone,
 For the tears that are falling
 So far from her own ;
 So far from thy own, love,
 We know not our pain ;
 If death is between us,
 Or only the main.

When the white cloud reclines
 On the verge of the sea,
 I fancy the white cliffs,
 And dream upon thee ;

But the cloud spreads its wings
To the blue heav'n and flies.
We never shall meet, love,
Except in the skies !

TO AN ABSENTEE.

O'ER hill, and dale, and distant sea,
Through all the miles that stretch between,
My thought must fly to rest on thee,
And would, though worlds should intervene.

Nay, thou art now so dear, methinks
The farther we are forced apart,
Affection's firm elastic links
But bind the closer round the heart.

For now we sever each from each,
I learn what I have lost in thee ;
Alas, that nothing less could teach,
How great indeed my love should be !

Farewell ! I did not know thy worth,
But thou art gone, and now 'tis prized :
So angels walk'd unknown on earth,
But when they flew were recognized !

ODE TO THE MOON.

I.

MOTHER of light ! how fairly dost thou go
 Over those hoary crests, divinely led !—
 Art thou that huntress of the silver bow
 Fabled of old ? Or rather dost thou tread
 Those cloudy summits thence to gaze below,
 Like the wild Chamois from her Alpine snow,
 Where hunter never climb'd,—secure from dread ?
 How many antique fancies have I read
 Of that mild presence ! and how many wrought !
 Wondrous and bright,
 Upon the silver light,
 Chasing fair figures with the artist, Thought !

II.

What art thou like ?—Sometimes I see thee ride
 A far-bound galley on its perilous way,
 Whilst breezy waves toss up their silvery spray ;—
 Sometimes behold thee glide,
 Cluster'd by all thy family of stars,
 Like a lone widow, through the welkin wide,
 Whose pallid cheek the midnight sorrow mars ;—

Sometimes I watch thee on from steep to steep,
Timidly lighted by thy vestal torch,
Till in some Latmian cave I see thee creep,
To catch the young Endymion asleep,—
Leaving thy splendour at the jagged porch!—

III.

Oh, thou art beautiful, howe'er it be!
Huntress, or Dian, or whatever named;
And he, the veriest Pagan, that first framed
A silver idol, and ne'er worshipp'd thee!—
It is too late, or thou shouldst have my knee;
Too late now for the old Ephesian vows,
And not divine the crescent on thy brows!—
Yet, call thee nothing but the mere mild Moon,
 Behind those chestnut boughs,
Casting their dappled shadows at my feet;
I will be grateful for that simple boon,
In many a thoughtful verse and anthem sweet,
And bless thy dainty face whene'er we meet.

IV.

In nights far gone,—aye, far away and dead,—
Before Care-fretted with a lidless eye,—
I was thy wooer on my little bed,
Letting the early hours of rest go by,
To see thee flood the heaven with milky light,
And feed thy snow-white swans, before I slept;
For thou wert then purveyor of my dreams,—
Thou wert the fairies' armourer, that kept

Their burnish'd helmets, and crowns, and corselets
 bright,
 Their spears, and glittering mails ;
 And ever thou didst spill in winding streams
 Sparkles and midnight gleams,
 For fishes to new gloss their argent scales !—

V.

Why sighs ?—why creeping tears ?—why clasped
 hands ?—
 Is it to count the boy's expended dow'r ?
 That fairies since have broke their gifted wands ?
 That young Delight, like any o'erblown flow'r,
 Gave, one by one, its sweet leaves to the ground ?—
 Why then, fair Moon, for all thou mark'st no hour,
 Thou art a sadder dial to old Time
 Than ever I have found
 On sunny garden-plot, or moss-grown tow'r,
 Motto'd with stern and melancholy rhyme.

VI.

Why should I grieve for this ?—Oh I must yearn,
 Whilst Time, conspirator with Memory,
 Keeps his cold ashes in an ancient urn,
 Richly emboss'd with childhood's revelry,
 With leaves and cluster'd fruits, and flow'rs
 eterne,—
 (Eternal to the world, though not to me,)
 Aye there will those brave sports and blossoms be,
 The deathless wreath, and undecay'd festoon,

When I am hearsed within,—
Less than the pallid primrose to the Moon,
That now she watches through a vapour thin.

VII.

So let it be :—Before I lived to sigh,
Thou wert in Avon, and a thousand rills,
Beautiful Orb ! and so, whene'er I lie
Trodden, thou wilt be gazing from thy hills.
Blest be thy loving light, where'er it spills,
And blessed thy fair face, O Mother mild !
Still shine, the soul of rivers as they run,
Still lend thy lonely lamp to lovers fond,
And blend their plighted shadows into one :—
Still smile at even on the bedded child,
And close his eyelids with thy silver wand !

THE FORSAKEN.

THE dead are in their silent graves,
 And the dew is cold above,
 And the living weep and sigh,
 Over dust that once was love.

Once I only wept the dead,
 But now the living cause my pain :
 How couldst thou steal me from my tears,
 To leave me to my tears again ?

My Mother rests beneath the sod,—
 Her rest is calm and very deep :
 I wish'd that she could see our loves,—
 But now I gladden in her sleep.

Last night unbound my raven locks,
 The morning saw them turn'd to gray,
 Once they were black and well beloved,
 But thou art changed,—and so are they !

The useless lock I gave thee once,
 To gaze upon and think of me,
 Was ta'en with smiles,—but this was torn.
 In sorrow that I send to thee.

ODE TO MELANCHOLY.

COME, let us set our careful breasts,
 Like Philomel, against the thorn,
 To aggravate the inward grief,
 That makes her accents so forlorn ;
 The world has many cruel points,
 Whereby our bosoms have been torn,
 And there are dainty themes of grief,
 In sadness to outlast the morn,—
 True honour's dearth, affection's death,
 Neglectful pride, and cankering scorn,
 With all the piteous tales that tears
 Have water'd since the world was born.

The world !—it is a wilderness,
 Where tears are hung on every tree ;
 For thus my gloomy phantasy
 Makes all things weep with me !
 Come let us sit and watch the sky,
 And fancy clouds, where no clouds be ;
 Grief is enough to blot the eye,
 And make heav'n black with misery.
 Why should birds sing such merry notes,

Unless they were more blest than we ?
No sorrow ever chokes their throats,
Except sweet nightingale ; for she
Was born to pain our hearts the more
With her sad melody.

Why shines the sun, except that he
Makes gloomy nooks for Grief to hide,
And pensive shades for Melancholy,
When all the earth is bright beside ?
Let clay wear smiles, and green grass wave,
Mirth shall not win us back again,
Whilst man is made of his own grave,
And fairest clouds but gilded rain !

I saw my mother in her shroud,
Her cheek was cold and very pale ;
And ever since I've look'd on all
As creatures doom'd to fail !
Why do buds ope, except to die ?
Aye, let us watch the roses wither,
And think of our loves' cheeks ;
And oh, how quickly time doth fly
To bring death's winter hither !
Minutes, hours, days, and weeks,
Months, years, and ages, shrink to nought ;
An age past is but a thought !

Aye, let us think of Him a while,
That, with a coffin for a boat,
Rows daily o'er the Stygian moat,

And for our table choose a tomb :
There's dark enough in any skull
To charge with black a raven plume ;
And for the saddest funeral thoughts
A winding sheet hath ample room,
Where Death, with his keen-pointed style,
Hath writ the common doom.
How wide the yew-tree spreads its gloom,
And o'er the dead lets fall its dew,
As if in tears it wept for them,
The many human families
That sleep around its stem !
How cold the dead have made these stones,
With natural drops kept ever wet !
Lo ! here the best, the worst, the world
Doth now remember or forget,
Are in one common ruin hurl'd,
And love and hate are calmly met ;
The loveliest eyes that ever shone,
The fairest hands, and locks of jet.
Is't not enough to vex our souls,
And fill our eyes, that we have set
Our love upon a rose's leaf,
Our hearts upon a violet ?
Blue eyes, red cheeks, are frailer yet ;
And, sometimes, at their swift decay
Beforehand we must fret :
The roses bud and bloom again ;
But love may haunt the grave of love,
And watch the mould in vain.

O clasp me, sweet, whilst thou art mine,
And do not take my tears amiss ;
For tears must flow to wash away
A thought that shows so stern as this :
Forgive, if somehow I forget,
In woe to come, the present bliss.
As frightened Proserpine let fall
Her flowers at the sight of Dis,
Ev'n so the dark and bright will kiss.
The sunniest things throw sternest shade,
And there is ev'n a happiness
That makes the heart afraid !
Now let us with a spell invoke
The full-orb'd moon to grieve our eyes ;
Not bright, not bright, but, with a cloud
Lapp'd all about her, let her rise
All pale and dim, as if from rest
The ghost of the late buried sun
Had crept into the skies.
The Moon ! she is the source of sighs,
The very face to make us sad ;
If but to think in other times
The same calm quiet look she had,
As if the world held nothing base,
Of vile and mean, of fierce and bad ;
The same fair light that shone in streams,
The fairy lamp that charm'd the lad ;
For so it is, with spent delights
She taunts men's brains, and makes them mad.

All things are touched with Melancholy,
Born of the secret soul's mistrust,
To feel her fair ethereal wings
Weighed down with vile degraded dust;
Even the bright extremes of joy
Bring on conclusions of disgust,
Like the sweet blossoms of the May,
Whose fragrance ends in must.
O give her, then, her tribute just,
Her sighs and tears, and musings holy!
There is no music in the life
That sounds with idiot laughter solely;
There's not a string attuned to mirth,
But has its chord in Melancholy.

ON A NATIVE SINGER

AFTER HEARING MISS ADELAIDE KEMBLE.

As sweet as the bird that by calm Bendemeer,
Pours such rich modulations of tone —
As potent, as tender, as brilliant, as clear —
Still her voice has a charm of its own.

For lo! like the skylark, when after its song
It drops down to its nest from above,
She reminds us her home and her music belong
To the very same soil that we love.

GUIDO AND MARINA.

A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

[Guido, having given himself up to the pernicious study of magic and astrology, casts his nativity, and resolves that at a certain hour of a certain day he is to die. Marina, to wean him from this fatal delusion, which hath gradually wasted him away, even to the verge of death, advances the hour-hand of the clock. He is supposed to be seated beside her in the garden of his palace at Venice.]

Guido. Clasp me again ! My soul is very sad ;
And hold thy lips in readiness near mine,
Lest I die suddenly. Clasp me again !
Tis such a gloomy day !

Mar. Nay, sweet, it shines.

Guido. Nay, then, these mortal clouds are in
mine eyes.

Clasp me again ! — ay, with thy fondest force,
Give me one last embrace.

Mar. Love, I do clasp thee !

Guido. Then closer — closer — for I feel thee
not ;

Unless thou art this pain around my heart.

Thy lips at such a time should never leave me.

Mar. What pain — what time, love? Art
thou ill? Alas!

I see it in thy cheek. Come, let me nurse thee.
Here rest upon my heart.

Guido. Stay, stay, Marina.
Look! — when I raise my hand against the sun,
Is it red with blood?

Mar. Alas! my love, what
wilt thou?

Thy hand is red — and so is mine — all hands
Show thus against the sun.

Guido. All living men's,
Marina, but not mine. Hast never heard
How death first seizes on the feet and hands,
And thence goes freezing to the very heart?

Mar. Yea, love, I know it; but what then? —
this hand
I hold is glowing.

Guido. But my eyes! — my eyes!
Look *there*, Marina — there is death's own sign.
I have seen a corpse,
E'en when its clay was cold, would still have
seemed

Alive, but for the eyes — such deadly eyes!
So dull and dim! Marina, look in mine!

Mar. Ay, they are dull. No, no — not dull,
but bright:

I see myself within them. Now, dear love,
Discard these horrid fears that make me weep.

Guido. Marina, Marina — where thy image lies

There must be brightness — or perchance they
glance

And glimmer like the lamp before it dies.

Oh, do not vex my soul with hopes impossible !

My hours are ending. [*Clock strikes.*

Mar. Nay, they shall not ! Hark !

The hour — four — five — hark ! six ! — the very
time !

And, lo ! thou art alive ! My love — dear love —

Now cast this cruel phantasm from thy brain —

This wilful, wild delusion — cast it off !

The hour is come — and *gone* ! What ! not a word !

What, not a smile, even, that thou livest for me !

Come, laugh and clap thy hands as I do — come.

Or kneel with me, and thank th' eternal God

For this blest passover ! Still sad ! still mute ! —

Oh, why art thou not glad, as I am glad,

That death forbears thee ? Nay, hath all my love

Been spent in vain, that thou art sick of life ?

Guido. Marina, I'm no more attached to death

Than Fate hath doomed me. I am his elect,

That even now forestalls my little light,

And steals with cold infringement on my breath :

Already he bedims my spiritual lamp,

Not yet his due — not yet — quite yet, though

Time,

Perchance, to warn me, speaks before his wont :

Some minutes' space my blood has still to flow —

Some scanty breath is left me still to spend

In very bitter sighs.

But there's a point, true measured by my pulse,
Beyond or short of which it may not live
By one poor throb. Marina, it is near.

Mar. Oh, God of heaven!

Guido.

Ay, it is *very* near.

Therefore, cling now to me, and say farewell
Whilst I can answer it. Marina, speak!
Why tear thine helpless hair! it will not save
Thy heart from breaking, nor pluck out the thought
That stings thy brain. Oh, surely thou hast
known

This truth too long to look so like Despair!

Mar. O, no, no, no — a hope — a little hope —
I had erewhile — but I have heard its knell.
Oh, would my life were measured out with thine —
All my years numbered — all my days, my hours,
My utmost minutes, all summed up with thine!

Guido. Marina —

Mar. Let me weep — no, let me kneel
To God — but rather thee, — to spare this end
That is so wilful. Oh, for pity's sake!
Pluck back thy precious spirit from these clouds
That smother it with death. Oh! turn from death,
And do not woo it with such dark resolve,
To make me widowed. —

Guido.

I have lived my term.

Mar. No — not thy term — no, not the natural
term

Of one so young. Oh! thou hast spent thy years
In sinful waste upon unholy —

Guido.

Hush !

Marina.

Mar. Nay, I must. Oh ! cursed lore,
That hath supplied this spell against thy life.
Unholy learning — devilish and dark —
Study ! — O, God, O, God ! — how can thy stars
Be bright with such black knowledge ! Oh, that
men
Should ask more light of them, than guides their
steps
At evening to love !

Guido.

Hush, hush, oh, hush !

Thy words have pained me in the midst of pain,
True, if I had not read,— I should not die,
For, if I had not read, I had not been.
All of our acts of life are pre-ordained,
And each pre-acted, in our several spheres,
By ghostly duplicates. They sway our deeds
By their performance. What if mine hath been
To be a prophet and foreknow my doom ?
If I had closed my eyes, the thunder then
Had roared it in my ears ; my own mute brain
Had told it with a tongue. What must be, must.
Therefore I knew when my full time would fall —
And now — to save thy widowhood of tears —
To spare the very breaking of thy heart,
I may not gain even a brief hour's reprieve !
What see'st thou yonder ?

Mar.

Where ? — a tree — the sun
Sinking behind a tree.

Guido. It is no tree,
Marina, but a shape — the awful shape
That comes to claim me. Seest thou not his shade
Darken before his steps? Ah, me! how cold
It comes against my feet! — Cold, icy cold!
And blacker than a pall.

Mar. My love!

Guido. Oh, heaven
And earth, where are ye? Marina —

[*Guido dies.*

Mar. I am here!
What wilt thou? dost thou speak! — Methought
I heard thee
Just whispering — He is dead! — Oh, God! he's
dead!

ANSWER

O A LADY WHO REQUESTED THE AUTHOR TO WRITE SOME
VERSES IN HER ALBUM, DECLARATORY OF WHAT HE
LIKED AND WHAT HE DISLIKED.

You bid me mention what I like,
And, gaily smiling, little guess
How deeply may that question strike
The chords of solemn thankfulness.

I like my friends, my children, wife —
The home they make so blessed a spot;
I like my fortune — calling — life —
In every thing I like my lot;
And feeling thus, my heart's imbued
With never-ceasing gratitude.

What I dislike, you next demand.
A puzzling query — for in me
Nought that proceeds from Nature's hand
Awakens an antipathy.
But what I like the least are those
Who nourish an unthankful mind,
Quick to discern imagined woes,
To all their real blessings blind,
For that is double want of love,
To man below, and God above.

I.

TO THE OCEAN.

SHALL I rebuke thee, Ocean, my old love,
That once, in rage with the wild winds at strife
Thou darest menace my unit of a life,
Sending my clay below, my soul above,
Whilst roar'd thy waves, like lions when they rove
By night and bound upon their prey by stealth?
Yet didst thou ne'er restore my fainting health?—
Didst thou ne'er murmur gently like the dove?
Nay, didst thou not against my own dear shore
Full break, last link between my land and me?—
My absent friends talk in thy very roar,
In thy waves' beat their kindly pulse I see,
And, if I must not see my England more,
Next to her soil, my grave be found in thee.

COBLENTZ, May, 1835.

II.

LEAR.

A POOR old king, with sorrow for my crown,
Throned upon straw, and mantled with the wind—
For pity, my own tears have made me blind
That I might never see my children's frown ;
And may be madness, like a friend, has thrown
A folded fillet over my dark mind,
So that unkindly speech may sound for kind,—
Albeit I know not.—I am childish grown—
And have not gold to purchase wit withal—
I that have once maintain'd most royal state—
A very bankrupt now that may not call
My child, my child—all-beggar'd save in tears,
Wherewith I daily weep an old man's fate,
Foolish—and blind—and overcome with years !

III.

SONNET TO A SONNET.

RARE composition of a poet-knight,
Most chivalrous amongst chivalric men,
Distinguish'd for a polish'd lance and pen
In tuneful contest and the tourney-fight ;
Lustrous in scholarship, in honour bright,
Accomplish'd in all graces current then,
Humane as any in historic ken,
Brave, handsome, noble, affable, polite ;
Most courteous to that race become of late
So fiercely scornful of all kind advance,
Rude, bitter, coarse, implacable in hate
To Albion, plotting ever her mischance,—
Alas, fair verse! how false and out of date
Thy phrase “sweet enemy” applied to France!

IV.

FALSE POETS AND TRUE.

LOOK how the lark soars upward and is gone,
Turning a spirit as he nears the sky !
His voice is heard, but body there is none
To fix the vague excursions of the eye.
So, poets' songs are with us, tho' they die
Obscured, and hid by death's oblivious shroud,
And earth inherits the rich melody,
Like raining music from the morning cloud.
Yet, few there be who pipe so sweet and loud,
Their voices reach us through the lapse of space :
The noisy day is deafen'd by a crowd
Of undistinguish'd birds, a twittering race ;
But only lark and nightingale forlorn
Fill up the silences of night and morn.

V.

MY heart is sick with longing, tho' I feed
On hope ; Time goes with such a heavy pace
That neither brings nor takes from thy embrace,
As if he slept—forgetting his old speed :
For, as in sunshine only we can read
The march of minutes on the dial's face,
So in the shadows of this lonely place
There is no love, and Time is dead indeed.
But when, dear lady, I am near thy heart,
Thy smile is time, and then so swift it flies,
It seems we only meet to tear apart
With aching hands and lingering of eyes.
Alas, alas ! that we must learn hours' flight
By the same light of love that makes them bright !

VI.

FOR THE 14TH OF FEBRUARY.

No popular respect will I omit
To do thee honour on this happy day,
When every loyal lover tasks his wit
His simple truth in studious rhymes to pay,
And to his mistress dear his hopes convey.
Rather thou knowest I would still outrun
All calendars with Love's,—whose date alway
Thy bright eyes govern better than the Sun,—
For with thy favour was my life begun ;
And still I reckon on from smiles to smiles,
And not by summers, for I thrive on none
But those thy cheerful countenance compiles :
Oh ! if it be to choose and call thee mine,
Love, thou art every day my Valentine.

VII.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

I.

OH, 'tis a touching thing to make one weep,—
A tender infant with its curtain'd eye,
Breathing as it would neither live nor die
With that unchanging countenance of sleep!
As if its silent dream, serene and deep,
Had lined its slumber with a still blue sky,
So that the passive cheeks unconscious lie
With no more life than roses—just to keep
The blushes warm, and the mild, odorous breath.
O blossom boy! so calm is thy repose,
So sweet a compromise of life and death,
'Tis pity those fair buds should e'er uncloze
For memory to stain their inward leaf,
Tinging thy dreams with unacquainted grief.

VIII.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

II.

THINE eyelids slept so beauteously, I deem'd
No eyes could wake so beautiful as they :
Thy rosy cheeks in such still slumbers lay,
I loved their peacefulness, nor ever dream'd
Of dimples ;—for those parted lips so seem'd,
I never thought a smile could sweetlier play,
Nor that so graceful life could chase away
Thy graceful death,—till those blue eyes upbeam'd.
Now slumber lies in dimpled eddies drown'd,
And roses bloom more rosily for joy,
And odorous silence ripens into sound,
And fingers move to sound,—All-beauteous boy !
How thou dost waken into smiles, and prove,
If not more lovely, thou art more like Love !

IX.

THE World is with me, and its many cares,
Its woes—its wants—the anxious hopes and fears
That wait on all terrestrial affairs—
The shades of former and of future years—
Foreboding fancies, and prophetic tears,
Quelling a spirit that was once elate.
Heavens ! what a wilderness the world appears,
Where Youth, and Mirth, and Health are out of
date ;
But no—a laugh of innocence and joy
Resounds, like music of the fairy race,
And, gladly turning from the world's annoy,
I gaze upon a little radiant face,
And bless, internally, the merry boy
Who “makes a *son-shine* in a shady place.”

WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF SHAKSPEARE.

How bravely Autumn paints upon the sky
The gorgeous fame of Summer which is fled !
Hues of all flow'rs that in their ashes lie,
Trophied in that fair light whereon they fed,
Tulip, and hyacinth, and sweet rose red,—
Like exhalations from the leafy mould,
Look here how honour glorifies the dead,
And warms their scutcheons with a glance of
gold!—

Such is the memory of poets old,
Who on Parnassus' hill have bloom'd elate;
Now they are laid under their marbles cold,
And turn'd to clay, whereof they were create;
But God Apollo hath them all enroll'd,
And blazon'd on the very clouds of fate !

II.

TO FANCY.

MOST delicate Ariel! submissive thing,
Won by the mind's high magic to its hest,—
Invisible embassy, or secret guest,—
Weighing the light air on a lighter wing;—
Whether into the midnight moon, to bring
Illuminate visions to the eye of rest,—
Or rich romances from the florid West,—
Or to the sea, for mystic whispering,—
Still by thy charm'd allegiance to the will,
The fruitful wishes prosper in the brain,
As by the fingering of fairy skill,—
Moonlight, and waters, and soft music's strain,
Odours, and blooms, and *my* Miranda's smile,
Making this dull world an enchanted isle.

III.

TO AN ENTHUSIAST.

YOUNG ardent soul, graced with fair Nature's
truth,

Spring warmth of heart, and fervency of mind,
And still a large late love of all thy kind,
Spite of the world's cold practice and Time's
tooth,

For all these gifts, I know not, in fair sooth,
Whether to give thee joy, or bid thee blind
Thine eyes with tears,—that thou hast not resign'd
The passionate fire and fierceness of thy youth :
For as the current of thy life shall flow,
Gilded by shine of sun or shadow-stain'd,
Through flow'ry valley or unwholesome fen,
Thrice blessed in thy joy, or in thy woe
Thrice cursed of thy race,—thou art ordain'd
To share beyond the lot of common men.

IV.

DEATH.

It is not death, that sometime in a sigh
This eloquent breath shall take its speechless
flight ;

That sometime these bright stars, that now reply
In sunlight to the sun, shall set in night ;
That this warm conscious flesh shall perish quite,
And all life's ruddy springs forget to flow ;
That thoughts shall cease, and the immortal
spright

Be lapp'd in alien clay and laid below ;
It is not death to know this,—but to know
That pious thoughts, which visit at new graves
In tender pilgrimage, will cease to go
So duly and so oft,—and when grass waves
Over the past-away, there may be then
No resurrection in the minds of men.

V.

By ev'ry sweet tradition of true hearts,
Graven by Time, in love with his own lore ;
By all old martyrdoms and antique smarts,
Wherein Love died to be alive the more ;
Yea, by the sad impression on the shore,
Left by the drown'd Leander, to endear
That coast for ever, where the billow's roar
Moaneth for pity in the Poet's ear ;
By Hero's faith, and the foreboding tear
That quench'd her brand's last twinkle in its fall ;
By Sappho's leap, and the low rustling fear
That sigh'd around her flight ; I swear by all,
The world shall find such pattern in my act,
As if Love's great examples still were lack'd.

VI.

ON RECEIVING A GIFT.

LOOK how the golden ocean shines above
Its pebbly stones, and magnifies their girth;
So does the bright and blessed light of love
Its own things glorify, and raise their worth.
As weeds seem flowers beneath the flattering
 brine,
And stones like gems, and gems as gems indeed,
Ev'n so our tokens shine; nay, they outshine
Pebbles and pearls, and gems and coral weed;
For where be ocean waves but half so clear,
So calmly constant, and so kindly warm,
As Love's most mild and glowing atmosphere,
That hath no dregs to be upturn'd by storm?
Thus, sweet, thy gracious gifts are gifts of price,
And more than gold to doting Avarice.

VII.

SILENCE.

THERE is a silence where hath been no sound,
THERE is a silence where no sound may be,
In the cold grave—under the deep deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound ;
No voice is hush'd—no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground :
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
Though the dun fox, or wild hyæna, calls,
And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
THERE the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

VIII.

TO MY WIFE.

THE curse of Adam, the old curse of all
Though I inherit in this feverish life
Of worldly toil, vain wishes, and hard strife,
And fruitless thought, in Care's eternal thrall,
Yet more sweet honey than of bitter gall
I taste, through thee, my Eva, my sweet wife.
Then what was Man's lost Paradise!—how rife
Of bliss, since love is with him in his fall!
Such as our own pure passion still might frame.
Of this fair earth, and its delightful bow'rs,
If no fell sorrow, like the serpent, came
To trail its venom o'er the sweetest flow'rs:—
But oh! as many and such tears are ours,
As only should be shed for guilt and shame!

IX.

LOVE, dearest Lady, such as I would speak,
Lives not within the humour of the eye ;—
Not being but an outward phantasy,
That skims the surface of a tinted cheek—
Else it would wane with beauty, and grow weak,
As if the rose made summer,—and so lie
Amongst the perishable things that die,
Unlike the love which I would give and seek
Whose health is of no hue—to feel decay
With cheeks' decay, that have a rosy prime.
Love is its own great loveliness alway,
And takes new lustre from the touch of time ;
Its bough owns no December and no May,
But bears its blossom into Winter's clime.

END OF VOLUME I.

